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THE
YOUNG STEP-MOTHER;

OR,
A CHRONICLE OF MISTAKES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE,' 'HEARTSEASE,' ETC.

Fall—yet rejoice, because no less
The failure that makes thy distress
May teach another full success.

Nor with thy share of work be vexed,
Though incomplete and even perplexed
It fits exactly to the next.

Adelaide A. Proctor.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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Misses Emma & Elizabeth Harris

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THE YOUNG STEP-MOTHER.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a beautiful July afternoon, the air musical with midsummer hum, the flowers basking in the sunshine, the turf cool and green in the shade, and the breeze redolent of indescribable freshness and sweetness compounded of all fragrant odours, the present legacy of a past day's shower. Like the flowers themselves, Albinia was feeling the delicious repose of refreshed nature, as in her pretty pink muslin, her white drapery folded round her, and her bright hair unbonneted, she sat reclining in a low garden chair, at the door of the conservatory, a little pale, a little weak, but with a sweet happy languor, a soft tender bloom.

There was a step in the conservatory, and before she could turn round, her brother Maurice bent over her, and kissed her.

'Maurice! you have come after all!'

'Yes, the school inspection is put off. How are you?' as he sat down on the grass by her side.

'Oh, quite well! What a delicious afternoon we shall have! Edmund will be at home directly. Mrs. Meadows has absolutely let Gilbert take her to drink tea at the Drurys! Only I am sorry Sophy should miss you, for

she was so good about going, because Lucy wanted to do something to her fernery. Of course you are come for Sunday, and the christening ?'

'Yes,—that is, to throw myself on Dusautoy's mercy.'

'We will send Mr. Hope to Fairmead,' said Albinia, 'and see whether Winifred can make him speak. We can't spare the Vicar, for he is our godfather, and you must christen the little maiden.'

'I thought the three elder ones were to be sponsors.'

'Gilbert is shy,' said Albinia, 'afraid of the responsibility, and perhaps he is almost too near, the very next to ourselves. His father would have preferred Mr. Dusautoy from the first, and only yielded to my wish. I wish you had come two minutes sooner, *she* was being paraded under that wall, but now she is gone in asleep.'

'Her father writes grand things of her.'

'Does he ?' said Albinia, colouring and smiling at what could not be heard too often ; 'he is tolerably satisfied with the young woman ! And he thinks her like Edmund, and so she must be, for she is just like him. She will have such beautiful eyes. It is very good of her to take after him, since Maurice won't !'

'And she is to be another Albinia.'

'I represented the confusion, and how I always meant my daughter to be Winifred, but there's no doing anything with him ! It is only to be a second name. A. W. K. ! Think if she should marry a Mr. Ward !'

'No, she would not be awkward, if she were so a—warded.'

'It won't spell, Maurice,' cried Albinia, laughing at their nonsense, as usual, rose to the surface, 'but how is Winifred ?'

'As well as could be hoped under the affliction of not being able to come and keep you in order.'

'She fancied me according to the former pattern,' said Albinia, smiling ; 'I could have shown her a better specimen, not that it was any merit, for there were no worries, and Edmund was so happy, that it was pleasure enough to watch him.'

'I was coming every day to judge for myself, but I

thought things could not be very bad, while he wrote such flourishing accounts.'

'No, there were no more ponds!' said Albinia, 'and grandmamma happily was quite well, cured, I believe, by the excitement. Lucy took care of her, and Sophy read to me—how we have enjoyed those readings! Oh! and Aunt Gertrude has found a delightful situation for G  n  vi  ve, a barrister's family, with lots of little children—eighty pounds a year, and quite ready to value her, so she is off my mind.'

'Maurice, boy! come here,' she called, as she caught sight of a creature prancing astride on one stick, and waving another. On perceiving a visitor, the urchin came careering up, bouncing full tilt upon her, and clasping her round with both his stalwart arms. 'Gently, gently, boy,' she said, bending down, and looking with proud delight at her brother, as she held between her hands a face much like her own, as fair and freshly tinted, but with a peculiar squareness of contour, large blue eyes, with dark fringes, brimming over with mischief and fun, a bold, broad brow, and thick, light curls. There was a spring and vigour as of perpetual irrepressible life about the whole being, and the moment he had accepted his uncle's kiss, he poised his lance, and exclaimed, 'You are Bonaparte, I'm the Duke!'

'Indeed,' said Mr. Ferrars, at once seizing a wand, and bestriding the nearest bench. Two or three charges rendered the boy so uproarious, that presently he was ordered off, and to use the old apple tree as Bonaparte.

'What a stout fellow!' said Mr. Ferrars, as he went off at a plunging gallop, 'I should have taken him for at least five years old!'

'So he might be,' said Albinia, 'for strength and spirit—he is utterly fearless, and never cries, much as he knocks himself about! He will do anything but learn. The rogue! he once knew all his letters, but no sooner did he find they were the work of life, than he forgot every one, and was never so obstreperous as when called upon to say them. I gave up the point, but I foresee some fine scenes.'

‘His minding no one but you is an old story. I hope at least the exception continues.’

‘I have avoided testing it. I want all my forces for a decisive battle. I never heard of such a masterful imp,’ she continued, with much more exultation than anxiety, ‘his sisters have no chance with him, he rules them like a young Turk. There’s the pony! Sophy will let him have it as a right, and it is the work of my life to see that she is not defrauded of her rides.’

‘You don’t mean that that child rides anything but a stick.’

‘One would think he had been born in boots and spurs. Legitimately he only rides with some one leading the pony, but I have my suspicions that by some preternatural means he has been on the pony’s back, and round the yard alone, and that papa prudentially concealed it from me!’

‘I confess I should not like it,’ said her brother gravely.

‘Oh! I don’t mind that kind of thing. A real boy can’t be hurt, and I don’t care how wild he runs, so long as he is obedient and truthful. And true I think he is to the backbone, and I know he is reverend. We had such a disturbance because he would not say his prayers.’

‘Proof positive!’

‘Yes it was,’ said Albinia. ‘It did not seem to him orthodox without me, and when he was let into my room again, it was the prettiest sight! When he had been told of his little sister, all he said was that he did not want little girls—girls were stupid—’

‘Ah! that came of your premature introduction to my Albinia.’

‘Not at all. It was partly as William’s own nephew, and partly because pleasure was expected from him. But when he actually saw the little thing, that sturdy face grew so very soft and sweet, and when we told him he was her protector, he put both his hands tight together, and said, “I’ll be so good!” When he is with her, another child seems to shine out under the bluff pickle he generally is—he walks so quietly, and thinks it such an honour to touch her.’

'She will be his best tutor,' said Maurice, smiling but breaking off—

A sudden shriek of deadly terror rang out over the garden from the river! A second or two sufficed to show them Lucy at the other end of the foot-bridge that led across the canal to the towing-path. She did not look round, till Albinia clutching her, demanded, 'Where is he?'

Unable to speak, Lucy pointed down the towing-path, along which a horse was seen rushing wildly—a figure pursuing it. 'It was hitched up here—he must have scrambled up by the gate! Oh! mamma! mamma! He has run after him, but oh!'

Mr. Ferrars gave Lucy's arm a squeeze, a hint not to augment the horror. Something he said of 'Let me—and you had better—' but Albinia heard nothing, and was only bent on pressing forward.

The canal and path took a wide sweep round the meadow, and the horse was still in sight, galloping at full speed, with a small heap on his back, as they trusted, but the rapid motion, and their eyes strained and misty with alarm, caused an agony of uncertainty.

Albinia pointed across the meadows in anguish at not being able to make herself understood, and hoarsely said, 'the gate!'

Mr. Ferrars caught her meaning, and the next moment had leaped over the gutter, and splashed into the water meadow, but in utter hopelessness of being beforehand with the runaway steed! How could that gate be other than fatal? The horse was nearing it—the pursuer far behind—Mr. Ferrars not half way over the fields.

There was a loud cry from Lucy.—'He is caught! caught!'

A loud shout came back, was caught up, and sent on by both the pursuers, 'All right!'

Albinia had stood in an almost annihilation of conscious feeling. Even when her brother strode back to her repeating 'All safe, thanks be to God,' she neither spoke nor relaxed that intensity of watching. A few seconds more, and she sprang forward again as the horse was led

up by a young man at his side ; and on his back, laughing and chattering, sat Master Maurice. Algernon Dusautoy strode a few steps behind, somewhat aggrieved, but that no one saw.

The elder Maurice lifted down the younger one, who, as he was clasped by his mother, exclaimed, 'Oh! mamma, Bamfylde went so fast! I am to ride home again! He said so—he's my cousin!'

Albinia scarcely heard ; her brother however had turned to thank the stranger for her, and exclaimed, 'I should say you were an O'More.'

'I'm Ulick, from the Loughside Lodge,' was the answer. 'Is cousin Winifred here?'

'No, this is my sister, Mrs. Kendal, but—'

Albinia held out her hand, and grasped his ; 'I can't—Maurice, speak,' she said.

The little Maurice persisted in his demand to be remounted for the twelve yards to their own gate, but nobody heard him ; his uncle was saying a few words of explanation to the stranger, and Algernon Dusautoy was enunciating something intended as a gracious reception of the apologies which no one was making. All Albinia thought of was that the little unruly hand was warm and struggling, prisoned in her own ; all her brother cared for was to have her safely at home. He led her across the bridge, and into the garden, where they met Mr. Kendal, who had taken alarm from her absence ; Lucy ran up with her story, and almost at the same moment, Albinia, springing to him, murmured, 'Oh! Edmund, the great mercy—Maurice ;' but there she found herself making a hoarse shriek ; with a mingled sense of fright and shame, she smothered it, but there was an agony of suffocation, she felt her husband's arms round her, heard his voice, and her boy's scream of terror—felt them all unable to help her, and sank into unconsciousness.

Mr. Ferrars helped Mr. Kendal to carry his wife's inanimate form to her room. They used all means of restoration, but it was a long, heavy swoon, and a slow, painful revival. Mr. Kendal would have been in utter despair at hearing that the doctor was out, but for his

brother, with his ready resources and cheerful encouragement; and finally, she lifted her eyelids, and as she felt the presence of her two dearest guardians, whispered, 'Where is he?'

Lucy reported that he was with Susan, and Albinia, after hearing her husband again assure her that he was quite safe, lay still from exhaustion, but so calm, that her brother thought them best alone, and drew Lucy away.

In about a quarter of an hour Mr. Kendal came down, saying that she was quietly asleep, and he had left the nurse with her. He had yet to hear the story, and when he understood that the child had been madly careering along the towing-path, on the back of young Dusantoy's most spirited hunter, and had been only stopped when the horse was just about to leap the tall gate, he was completely overcome. When he spoke again, it was with the abrupt exclamation, 'That child! Lucy, bring him down!'

He marched the boy, full of life and mischief, though with a large red spot beneath each eye.

'Maurice!' Gilbert had often heard that tone, but Maurice never, and he tossed back his head with an innocent look of fearless wonder. 'Maurice, I find you have been a very naughty, disobedient boy. When you rode the pony round the yard, did not I order you never to do so again?'

'I did not do it again,' boldly rejoined Maurice.

'Speak the truth, sir. What do you mean by denying what you have done?' exclaimed his father, angrily.

'I didn't ride the pony,' indignantly cried the child; 'I rode a horse, saddled and bridled!'

'Don't answer me in that way!' thundered Mr. Kendal, and much incensed by the nice distinction, and not appreciating the sincerity of it, he gave the child a shake, rough enough to bring the red into his face, but not a tear. 'You knew it was very wrong, and you were as near as possible breaking your neck. You have frightened your mamma, so as to make her very ill, and I am sorry to find you most mischievous and unruly, not to be trusted out of sight. Now, listen to me, I shall punish

you very severely if you act in this disobedient way again.'

Papa angry, was a novel spectacle, at which Maurice looked as innocently and steadily as ever, so completely without fear or contrition, that he provoked a stern, 'Do you hear me, sir?' and another shake. Maurice flushed, and his chest heaved, though he did not sob, and his father, uncomfortable at such sharp dealing with so young a child, set him aside, with the words, 'There now, recollect what I have told you!' and walked to the window, where he stood silent for some seconds, while the boy stood with rounded shoulders, perplexed eye, and finger on his pouting lip, and Mr. Ferrars, newspaper in hand, watched him under his eyelids, and speculated what would be the best sort of mediation, or whether the young gentleman yet deserved it. He knew that his own Willie would have been a mere quaking, sobbing mass of terror, under such a shake, and he would like to have been sure whether that sturdy silence were obstinacy or fortitude.

The sound of the door-bell made Mr. Kendal turn round, and laying his hand on the little fellow's fair head, he said, 'There, Maurice, we'll say no more about it if you will be a good boy. Run away now, but don't go into your mamma's room.'

Maurice looked up, tossed his curls out of his eyes, shook himself, felt the place on his arm where the grip of the hand had been, and galloped off like the young colt that he was.

Albinia awoke, refreshed, though still shaken and feeble, and surprised to find that dinner was going on downstairs. Her own meal presently put such new force into her, that she felt able to speak Maurice's name without bursting into tears; and longing to see both her little ones beside her, she told the nurse to fetch the boy, but received for answer, 'No, Master Maurice said he would not come,' and the manner conveyed that it had been defiantly said. Master Maurice was no favourite in the nursery, and he was still less so, when his mamma, disregarding all mandates, set out to seek him. Already she heard from the stairs the wrangling with Susan, that

accompanied all his toilettes, and she found him the picture of firm, solid fairness, in his little *robe de nuit*, growling through the combing of his tangled locks. Though ordinarily scornful of caresses, he sprang to her and hugged her, as she sat down on a low chair, and he knelt in her lap, whispering with his head on her shoulder, and his arms round her neck, 'Mamma, were you dead?'

No, Maurice,' she answered with something of a sob, 'or I should not have my dear, dear little boy throttling me now! But why would you not come down to me?'

'Papa said I must not.'

'Oh, that was quite right, my boy;,' and though she unclasped the tight arms, she drew him nestling into her bosom. 'Oh, Maurice, it has been a terrible day! Does my little boy know how good the great God has been to him, and how near he was never seeing mamma nor his little sister again.'

Her great object was to make him thankful for his preservation, but with a child, knowing nothing of death, and heedless of fear, this was very difficult. The rapid motion had been delightful excitement, or if there had been any alarm, it was forgotten in the triumph. She had to change her note, and represent how the poor horse might have run into the river, or against a post! Maurice looked serious, and then she came to the high moral tone—mounting strangers' horses without leave—would papa, would Gilbert, think of such a thing? The full lip was put out, as though under conviction, and he hung his head. 'You won't do it again?' said she.

'No.'

She told him to say his prayers, guiding the confession and thanksgiving that she feared he did not fully follow. As he rose up, and saw the tears on her cheeks, he whispered, 'Mamma, did it make you so?'

Cause and effect were a great puzzle to him, but that swoon was the only thing that brought home to him that he had been guilty of something enormous, and when she owned that his danger had been the occasion, he stood and looked; then, standing bolt upright, with clasped

hands, and rosy feet pressed close together, he said, with a long breath, 'I'll never get on Bamfylde again till I'm a big boy.'

As he spoke, Mr. Kendal pushed open the half-closed door, and Albinia, looking up said, 'Here's a boy who knows he has done wrong, papa.'

Never was more welcome excuse for lifting the gallant child to his breast, and lavishing caresses that would have been tender but for the strong spirit of riot which turned them into a game at romps, cut short by Mr. Kendal, as soon as the noise grew *very* outrageous. 'That's enough to-night; good-night.' And when they each had kissed the monkey face tossing about among the clothes, Maurice might have heard more pride than pain in the 'I never saw such a boy!' with which they shut the door.

'This is not prudent!' said Mr. Kendal.

'Do you think I could have rested till I had seen him? and he said you had told him not to come down.'

'I would have brought him to you. You are looking very ill; you had better go to bed at once.'

'No, I should not sleep. Pray let me grow quiet first. Now you know you trust Maurice,—old Maurice, and I'll lie on the sofa like any mouse, if you'll bring him up and let him talk. You know it will be an interesting novelty for you to talk, and me to listen! and he has not seen the baby.'

Albinia gained her point, but Mr. Kendal and Lucy first tucked her up upon the sofa, till she cried out, 'You have swathed me hand and foot. How am I to show off that little Awk?'

'I'll take care of that,' said Mr. Kendal; and so he did, fully doing the honours of the little daughter, who had already fastened on his heart.

'But,' cried Albinia, breaking into the midst, 'who or what are we, ungrateful monsters, never to have thought of the man who caught that dreadful horse!'

'You shall see him as soon as you are strong enough,' said Mr. Kendal; 'your brother and I have been with him.'

‘Oh, I am glad; I could not rest if he had not been thanked. And can anything be done for him? What is he? I thought he was a gentleman.’

Maurice smiled, and Mr. Kendal answered, ‘Yes, he is Mr. Goldsmith’s nephew, and I am pleased to find that he is a connexion of your brother.’

‘One of the O’Mores,’ cried Albinia. ‘Oh, Maurice, is it really one of Winifred’s O’Mores?’

‘Even so,’ replied Mr. Ferrars; ‘the very last person I should have expected to meet on the banks of the Baye! It was that clever son of the captain’s for whose education Mr. Goldsmith paid, and it seems had sent for, to consider of his future destination. He only arrived yesterday.’

‘A very fine young man,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘I was particularly pleased with his manner, and it was an act of great presence of mind and dexterity.’

‘It is all a maze and mystery to me,’ said Albinia; ‘do tell me all about it. I can’t make out how the horse came there.’

‘I understood that young Dusautoy was calling here,’ said Mr. Kendal; ‘I wondered at even *his* coolness in coming in by that way, and at your letting him in.’

‘I saw nothing of him,’ said Albinia. ‘Perhaps he was looking for Gilbert.’

‘No,’ said Lucy, looking up from her work, with a slight blush, and demure voice of secret importance; ‘he had only stepped in for a minute, to bring me a new fern.’

‘Indeed,’ said her father; ‘I was not aware that he took interest in your fernery.’

‘He knows everything about ferns,’ said Lucy. ‘Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy once had a conservatory filled with the rarest specimens, and he has given me a great many directions how to manage them.’

‘Oh! if he could get you to listen to his maxims, I don’t wonder at anything,’ exclaimed Albinia.

‘He had only just come in with the *Adiantum*, and was telling me how hydraulic power directed a stream of water near the roots among his mother’s *Fuci*,’ said

Lucy, rather hurt. 'He had fastened up his horse quite securely, and nobody could have guessed that Maurice could have opened that gate to cross the bridge, far less have climbed up the rail to the horse's back. I never shall forget my fright, when we heard the creature's feet, and Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy began to run after it directly.

'As foolish a thing as he could have done,' said Mr. Kendal, not impressed with Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy's condescension in giving chase. 'It was well poor little Maurice was not abandoned to your discretion, and his resources.'

'It seems,' continued Mr. Ferrars, 'that young O'More was taking a walk on the towing-path, and was just so far off as to see, without being able to prevent it, this little monkey scramble from the gate upon the horse's neck. How it was that he did not go down between, I can't guess; the beast gave a violent start, as well it might, jerked the reins loose, and set off full gallop. Seeing the child clinging on like a young panther, he dashed across the meadow, to cut him off at the turn of the river; and it was a great feat of swiftness, I assure you, to run so lightly through those marshy meadows, so as to get the start of the runaway; then he crept up under cover of the hedge, so as not to startle the horse, and had hold of the bridle, just as he paused before leaping the gate! He said he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the urchin safe, and looking more excited than terrified.'

'Yes, he was exceedingly struck with Maurice's spirit,' said Mr. Kendal, who, when the fright and anger were over, could begin to be proud of the exploit.

'They fraternized at once,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'Maurice imparted that his name was Maurice Ferrars Kendal, and Ulick, in all good faith and Irish simplicity, discovered that they were cousins!'

'Oh! Edmund, he must come to the christening dinner!'

'Mind,' said Maurice, 'you know he is not even my wife's cousin; only nephew to her second cousin's husband.'

'For shame, Maurice; cousin is that cousinly does!'

'Very well; only don't tell the aunts that Winifred saddled all the O'Mores upon you.'

'Not an O'More but should be welcome for his sake!'

'Nor an Irishman,' said Mr. Ferrars.

Albinia suffered so much from the shock, that she could not make her appearance till noon on the following day. Then, after sitting a little while in the old study, to hear that grandmamma had not been able to sleep all night for thinking of Maurice's danger, and being told some terrible stories of accidents with horses, she felt one duty done, and moved on to the drawing-room in search of her brother.

She found herself breaking upon a *tête-à-tête*. A sweet, full voice, with strong cadences, was saying something about duty and advice, and she would have retreated, but her brother and the stranger both sprang up, and made her understand that she was by no means to go away. No introduction was wanted; she grasped the hand that was extended to her, and would have said something if she could, but she found herself not strong enough to keep from tears, and only said, 'I wish little Maurice were not gone out with his brother, but you will dine with us, and see him to-morrow.'

'With the greatest pleasure, if my uncle and aunt will spare me.'

'They must,' said Albinia; 'you must come to meet your old friend and *cousin*,' she added, mischievously glancing at Maurice; but he did not look inclined to disavow the relationship, and the youth was not a person whom any one would wish to keep at a distance. He seemed about nineteen or twenty years of age, not tall, but well made, and with an air of great ease and agility, rather lounging and careless, yet alert in a moment. The cast of his features at once betrayed his country, by the rounded temples, with the free wavy hair; the circular form of the eyebrow; the fully opened dark blue eye looking almost black when shaded; the short nose, and the well-cut chin and lips, with their outlines of sweetness and of fun, all thoroughly Irish, but of the best style, and

with a good deal of thought and mind on the brow, and determination in the mouth. Albinia had scarcely a minute, however, for observation, for he seemed agitated, and in haste to take leave, nor did her brother press him to remain, since she was still looking very white and red, and too fragile for anything but rest. With another squeeze of the hand she let him go, while he, with murmured thanks, and head bent in enthusiastic honour to the warm kindness of one so sweet and graceful, took leave. Mr. Ferrars followed him into the hall, leaving the door open, so that she heard the words, 'Good-bye, Ulick; I'll do my best for you. All I can say is, that I respect you.'

'Don't respect me too soon,' he answered; 'maybe you'll have to change your mind. The situation may like me no better than I the situation.'

'No, what you will, you can do; I trust to your perseverance.'

'As my poor mother does! Well, with patience the snail got to Rome; and if it is to lighten her load, I must bear it. Many thanks, Mr. Ferrars. Good morning.'

'Good morning; only, Ulick, excuse me, but let me give you a hint; if the situation is to like you, you must mind your Irish.'

'Then you must not warm my heart with your kindness,' was the answer. 'No, no, never fear, when I'm not with any one who has seen Ballymakilty, I can speak English so that I could not be known for a Galway man. Not that I'm ashamed of my country,' he added; and the next moment the door shut behind him.

'How could you scold him for his Irish?' exclaimed Albinia, as her brother re-entered; 'it sounds so pretty and characteristic.'

'I fear Mr. Goldsmith may think it too characteristic!'

'I am sure Edmund might well call him prepossessing. I hope Mr. Goldsmith is going to do something handsome for him!'

'Poor lad! Mr. Goldsmith considers that he has purchased him for a permanent fixture on a high stool.'

It is a sad disappointment, for he had been doing his utmost to prepare himself for college, and he has so far distinguished himself at school, that I see that a very little help would soon enable him to maintain himself at the University. I could have found it in my heart to give it to him myself; it would please Winifred.'

'Oh, let us help; I am sure Edmund would be glad.'

'No, no, this is better for all. Remember this is the Goldsmiths' only measure of conciliation towards their sister since her marriage, and it ought not to be interfered with. Poor Ulick says he knows this is the readiest chance of being of any use to his family, and that his mother has often said she should be happy if she could but see one of the six launched in a way to be independent! There are those three eldest, little better than squireens, never doing a thing but loafing about with their guns. I used to long for a horse-whip to lay about them, till they spoke to me, and then not one of the rogues but won my heart with his fun and good-nature.'

'Then I suppose it is a great thing to have one in the way of money-making.'

'Hem? The Keltic blood is all in commotion! This boy's business was to ask my candid opinion whether there were anything ungentlemanlike in a clerkship in a bank. It was well it was not you!'

'Now, Maurice, don't you know how glad I should have been if Gilbert would have been as wise!'

'Yes, you have some common sense after all, which is more than Ulick attributes to his kith and kin. When I had proved the respectability of banking to his conviction, I'll not say satisfaction, he made me promise to write to his father. He is making up his mind to what is not only a great vexation to himself, and very irksome employment, but he knows he shall be looked down upon as having lost caste with all his family!'

'It really is heroism!' cried Albinia.

'It is,' said Mr. Ferrars; 'he does not trust himself to face the clan, and means to get into harness at once, so as to clench his resolution, and relieve his parents from his maintenance immediately.'

‘Is he to live with that formal Miss Goldsmith!’

‘No. In solitary lodgings, after that noisy family and easy home! I can’t think how he will stand it. I should not wonder if the Galwegian was too strong after all.’

‘We must do all we can for him,’ cried Albinia; ‘Edmund likes him already. Can’t he dine with us every Sunday?’

‘I know you will be kind,’ said Mr. Ferrars. ‘Only see how things turn out before you commit yourself. Ah! I have said the unlucky word which always makes you fly off!’

There was little fear that Ulick O’More would not win his way with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, recommended as he was, and with considerable attractions in the frankness and brightness of his manner. He was a very pleasant addition to the party who dined at Willow Lawn, after the christening. No one had time to listen to Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy’s maxims, and he retired rather sullenly, to lean against the mantelpiece, and marvel why the Kendals should invite an Irish banker’s clerk to meet *him*. Gilbert likewise commented on the guest with a muttered observation on his sister’s taste; ‘Last year it was all the Polysyllable, now it would be all the Irishman!’

CHAPTER XIX.

THERE was a war of supremacy in the Kendal household. Albinia and her son were Greek to Greek, and if physical force were on her side, her own tenderness was against her. As to allies, Maurice had by far the majority of the household; the much-tormented Susan was her mistress’s sole supporter; Mr. Kendal and Sophy might own it inexpedient to foster his *outré* conduct, but they so loved to do his bidding, so hated to thwart him, and so grieved at his being punished, that they were little

better than Gilbert, Lucy, grandmamma, or any of the maids or men.

The moral sense was not yet stirred, and the boy seemed to be trying the force of his will like the strength of his limbs. Even as he delighted to lift a weight the moment he saw that it was heavy, so a command was to him a challenge to see how much he would undergo rather than obey; but his resistance was so open, gay, and free, that it could hardly be called obstinacy, and he gloried in disappointing punishment. The dark closet lost all terror for him; he stood there blowing the horn through his hand, content to follow an imaginary chase; and when untimely sent to bed, he stole Susan's scissors, and cut a range of stables in the sheets. The short, sharp infliction of pain answered best, but his father, though he could give a shake when angry, could *not* strike when cool; and Albinia was forced to turn executioner, though with such tears and trembling that her culprit looked up reassuringly, saying, 'Never mind, mamma, I shan't!' He did, however, *mind* her tears, they bore in upon him the sense of guilt; and after each transgression, he could not be at peace till he had marched up to her, holding out his hand for the blow, and making up his face not to wince, and then would cling round her neck to feel himself pardoned. Justice came to him in a most fair and motherly shape! The brightest, the merriest of all his playmates was mamma; he loved her passionately, and could endure no cloud between himself and her, so that he was slowly learning that submission to her was peace and pleasure, and rebellion mere pain to both. She established ten minutes of daily lessons, but even she could not reach beyond the capture of his restless person, his mind was out of reach, and keen as he was in every thing else, towards a-b-ab he was an unmitigated dunce. Nor did he obey any one who did not use authority and force of will, and though perfectly simple and sincere, he was too young to restrain himself without the assistance of the controlling power, so that in his mother's absence he was tyrannical and violent, and she never liked to have him out of her sight, and never was so sure that he

was deep in mischief as when she had not heard his voice for a quarter of an hour.

'Albinia,' said Mr. Kendal, one relenting autumn day, when November strove to look like April, 'I thought of walking to pay Farmer Graves for the corn. Will you come with me?'

'Delightful; I want to see what Maurice will say to the turkey-cock.'

'Is it not too far for him?'

'He would run quite as many miles in the garden,' said Albinia, who would have walked in dread of a court of justice on her return, had not the scarlet hose been safely prancing on the road before her.

'This way, then,' said Mr. Kendal; 'I must get this draft changed at the bank. Come, Maurice, you will see a friend there.'

'Do you know, Edmund,' said Albinia, as they set forth, 'my conscience smites me as to that youth; I think we have neglected him.'

'I cannot see what more we could have done. If his uncle does not bring him forward in society, we cannot interfere.'

'It must be a forlorn condition,' said Albinia; 'he is above the other clerks, and he seems to be voted below the Bayford *élite*, since the Polysyllable had made it so very refined! One never meets him anywhere now it is too dark to walk after the banking hours. Cannot we ask him to come in some evening?'

'We cannot have our evenings broken up,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I should be glad to show him any kindness, but his uncle seems to have ruled it that he is to be considered more as his clerk than as one of his family, and I doubt if it would be doing him any service to interfere.'

They were now at the respectable old freestone building, with 'Goldsmith' inscribed on the iron window-blinds, and a venerable date carved over the door. Inside, those blinds came high, and let in but little light over the tall desks, at which were placed the black horse-hair perches of the clerks, old Mr. Goldsmith himself occupying a lower throne, more accessible to the clients.

One of the high stools stood empty, and Albinia making inquiry, Mr. Goldsmith answered, with a dry, dissatisfied cough, that More, as he called him, had struck work, and gone home with a headache.

‘Indeed,’ said Albinia, ‘I am sorry to hear it. Mr. Hope said he thought him not looking well.’

‘He has complained of headache a good deal lately,’ said Mr. Goldsmith. ‘Young men don’t find it easy to settle to business.’

Albinia’s heart smote her for not having thought more of her son’s rescuer, and she revolved what could or what might have been done. It really was not easy to show him attention, considering Gilbert’s prejudice against his accent, and Mr. Kendal’s dislike to an interrupted evening, and all she could devise was a future call on Miss Goldsmith. But for Maurice, it would have been a silent walk, and though her mind was a little diverted by his gallant attempt to bestride the largest pig in the farm-yard, she was sure Mr. Kendal was musing on the same topic, and was not surprised when, as they returned, he exclaimed, ‘I have a great mind to go and see after that poor lad.’

‘This way, then,’ said Albinia, turning down a narrow muddy street parallel with the river.

‘Impossible!’ said Mr. Kendal; ‘he can never live at the Wharves!’

‘Yes,’ said Albinia; ‘he told me that he lodged with an old servant of the Goldsmiths, Pratt’s wife, at the Lower Wharf.’

She pointed to the name of Pratt over a shop-window in a house that had once seen better days, but which looked so forlorn, that Mr. Kendal would not look the slatternly maid in the face while so absurd a question was asked as whether Mr. O’More lived there.

The girl, without further ceremony, took them up a dark stair, and opened the door of a twilight room, where Albinia’s first glimpse showed her the young man with his head bent down on his arms on the table, as close as possible to the forlorn black fire, of the grim, dull, sulky coal of the county, which had filled the room with smoke

and blacks. The window, opened to clear it, only admitted the sickly scent of decaying weed from the river to compete with the perfume of the cobbler's stock-in-trade. Ulick started up pale and astonished, and Mr. Kendal, struck with consternation, chiefly thought of taking away his wife and child from the infected atmosphere, and made signs to Albinia not to sit down; but she was eagerly compassionate.

'It was nothing,' said Ulick; 'only his head was rather worse than usual, and he thought it time to give in when the threes put lapwings' feathers in their caps just like the fives.'

'Are you subject to these headaches?'

'It is only home-sickness,' he said. 'I'll have got over it soon.'

'I must come and see after you, my good friend,' said Mr. Kendal, with suppressed impatience and anxiety. 'I shall return in a moment or two, but I am sure you are not well enough for so many visitors taking you by surprise. Come.'

He was so peremptory, that Albinia found herself on the staircase before she knew what she was about. The fever panic had seized Mr. Kendal in full force; he believed typhus was in the air, and insisted on her taking Maurice home at once, while he went himself to fetch Mr. Bowles. She did not in the least credit fever to be in the chill touch of that lizard hand, and believed that she could have been the best doctor; but there was no arguing while he was under this alarm, and she knew that she might be thankful not to be ordered to observe a quarantine.

When Mr. Kendal returned home he looked much discomposed, though his first words were, 'Thank Heaven, it is no fever! Albinia, we must look after that poor lad; he is positively poisoned by that pestiferous river and bad living! Bowles said he was sure he was not eating meat enough. I dare say that greasy woman gives him nothing fit to eat! Albinia, you must talk to him—find out whether old Goldsmith gives him a decent salary!'

‘He ought not to be in those lodgings another day. I suppose Miss Goldsmith had no notion what they were. I fancy she never saw the Lower Wharf in her life.’

‘I never did till to-day,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘It was all of a piece—the whole street—the room—the furniture—why the paper was coming off the walls! What could they be dreaming of! And there he was, trying to read a little edition of Prudentius, printed at Salamanca, which he picked up at a bookstall at Galway. It must have belonged to some priest educated in Spain. He says any Latin book was invaluable to him. He is infinitely too good for his situation, and the Goldsmiths are neglecting him infamously. Look out some rooms fit for him, Albinia.’

‘I will try. Let me see—if I could only recollect any; but Mr. Hope has the only really nice ones in the place.’

‘Somewhere he must be, if it is in this house.’

‘There is poor old Madame Belmarché’s still empty, with Bridget keeping it. I wish he could have rooms there.’

‘Well, why not? Pettilove told me it must be let as two tenements. If the old woman could take half, a lodger would pay her rent,’ said Mr. Kendal, promptly. ‘You had better propose it.’

‘And the Goldsmiths?’ asked Albinia.

‘I will show him the Lower Wharf.’

The next afternoon Mr. Kendal desired his wife to go to the Bank and borrow young O’More for her walking companion.

‘Really I don’t know whether I have the impudence.’

‘I will come and do it for you. You will do best alone with the lad; I want you to get into his confidence, and find out whether old Goldsmith treats him properly. I declare, but that I know John Kendal so well, this would be enough to make me rejoice that Gilbert is not thrown on the world!’

Albinia knew herself to be so tactless, that she saw little hope of her doing anything but setting him against his relations; but her husband was in no frame to hear

objections, so she made none, and only trusted she should not be very foolish. At least, the walk would be a positive physical benefit to the slave of the desk.

Ulick O'More was at his post, and said his head was well, but his hair stuck up as if his fingers had been many times run through it; he was much thinner, and the wearied countenance, whitened complexion, and spiritless sunken eyes, were a sad contrast to the glowing freshness and life that had distinguished him in the summer.

Mr. Kendal told the Banker that it had been decided that his nephew needed exercise, and that Mrs. Kendal would be glad of his company in a long walk. Mr. Goldsmith seemed rather surprised, but consented; whereupon the young clerk lighted up into animation, and bounded out of his prison house, with a springy step learnt upon mountain heather. Mr. Kendal only waited to hear whither they were bound.

'Oh! as far as we can go on the Woodside road,' said Albinia. 'I think the prescription I used to inflict on poor Sophy will not be thrown away here. I always fancy there is a whiff of sea air upon the hill there.'

Ulick smiled at such a fond delusion, bred up as he had been upon the wildest seacoast, exposed to the full sweep of the Atlantic storm! She set him off upon his own scenery to the destruction of his laborious English, as he dwelt on the glories of his beloved rocks rent by fierce sea winds and waves into fantastic, grotesque, or lovely shapes, with fiords of exquisite blue sea between, the variety of which had been to him as the gentle foliage of tamer countries. Not a tree stood near the 'town' of Ballymakilty, but the wild crags, the sparkling waters, the broad open hills, and the bogs, with their intensely purple horizon, held fast upon his heart; and he told of white sands, reported to be haunted by mermaids, and crevices of rock where the tide roared, and gave rise to legends of sea monsters, and giants turned to stone. He was becoming confidential and intimate when, in a lowered voice, he mentioned the Banshee's crag, where the shrouded messenger of doom never failed to bewail each dying child of the O'More, and where his own old nurse

had actually beheld her keening for the uncle who was killed among the Caffres. Albinia began to know how she ought to respect the O'Mores.

They were skirting the side of the hill, with a dip of green meadow-land below them, rising on the other side into coppices. The twang of the horn, and the babbling cry of the hounds, reminded Albinia that the hunting season had begun, and looking over a gate, she watched the parti-coloured forms of the dogs glancing among the brushwood opposite, and an occasional red coat gleaming out through the edge above. Just then the cry ceased, the dogs became silent, and scattered hither and thither bewildered. Ulick looked eagerly, then suddenly vaulted over the gate, went forward a few steps, looked again, pointed towards some dark object which she could barely discern, put his finger in his ear, and uttered an unearthly screech, incomprehensible to her, but well understood by the huntsman, and through him by the dogs, which at once simultaneously dashed in one direction, and came pouring into the meadow over towards him; down went their heads, up went their curved tails; the clatter and rushing of hoofs, and the apparition of red coats, showed the hunters all going round the copse, while at the same moment, away with winged steps bounded her companion, flying headlong like the wind, so as to meet the hunt.

‘Ask me not what the lady feels,
Left in that dreadful hour alone,’

laughed Albinia to herself. ‘Well done, speed! Edmund might be satisfied there’s not much amiss! Through the hedge—over the meadow—a flying leap over the stream—it is more like a bird than a man—up again. Does he mean to follow the hunt all the rest of the way? Rather Irish, I must say! And I do believe they will all come down this lane! I must walk on; it won’t do to be overtaken here between these high hedges. Ah! I thought he was too much of a gentleman to leave me—here he comes. How much in his way I must be! I never saw such a runner; not a bit does he slacken for

the hill—and what bright cheeks and eyes! What good it must have done him!’

‘I beg ten thousand pardons!’ cried he, as he came up, scarcely out of breath. ‘I declare I forgot you; I could not help it, when I saw them at a check!’

‘You feel for the hunter as I do for the fox,’ said Albinia. ‘Is yours one of the great hunting neighborhoods?’

‘That it is!’ he cried. ‘My grandfather had the grand stud! He and his seven sons were out three times in the week, and there was a mount for whoever wanted it!’

‘And this generation is not behind the last?’

‘Ah! and why would it be?’ exclaimed the boy, the last remnant of English pronunciation forsaking him. ‘My Uncle Connel has the best mare on this side the bridge of Athlone! I mean that side.’

‘And how is it with you?’ asked Albinia.

‘We’ve got no horses—that is, except my father’s mare, and the colt, and Fir Darrig—the swish-tailed pony—and the blind donkey that brings in the turf. So we younger ones mostly go hunting on foot; and after all I believe that’s the best sport. Bryan always comes in before any of the horses, and we all think it a shame if we don’t!’

‘I see where you learnt the swiftness of foot that was so useful last July,’ said Albinia.

‘That? oh! but Bryan would have been up long before me,’ said Ulick. ‘He’d have made for the lock, not the gate! You should see what sport we have when the fox takes to the Corrig Dearg up among the rocks—and little Rosie upon Fir Darrig, with her hair upon the wind, and her colour like the morning cloud, glancing in and out among the rocks like the fairy of the glen. There are those that think her the best part of the hunt; they say the English officers at Ochlochtimore would never think it worth coming out but for her. I don’t believe that, you know,’ he added, laughing, ‘though I like to fetch a rise out of Ulick at the great house by telling him of it.’

‘How old is she?’

'Fifteen last April, and she is like an April wind, when it comes warm and frolicking over the sea! So wild and free, and yet so gentle and soft! Ellen and Mary are grave and steady, and work hard—every stitch of my stockings was poor Mary's knitting, except what poor old Peggy would send up for a compliment; but Rosie—I don't think she does a thing but sing, and ride, and row the boat, and keep the house alive! My mother shakes her head, but I don't know what she'll say when she gets my aunt's letter. My Aunt Goldsmith purses up her lips, and says, "I'll write to advise my sister to send her daughters to some good school." Ellen, maybe, might bear one, but ah! the thought of little Rosie in a good school!'

'Like her brother Ulick in a good bank, eh?'

'Why,' he cried, 'they always called me the steady Englishman!'

Albinia laughed, but at that moment the sounds of the hunt again occupied them, and all were interpreted by Ulick with the keenest interest; but he would not run away again, though she exhorted him not to regard her. Presently it swept on out of hearing, and by-and-bye they reached the summit of the hill, and looked forth on the dark pine plantations on the opposite undulation, standing out in black relief against a sky golden with a pale, pure, pearly November sunset, a 'daffodil sky' flecked with tiny fleeces of soft bright-yellow light, reminding Albinia of Fouqué's beautiful dream of Aslauga's golden hair showing the gates of Heaven to her devoted knight. She looked for her companion's sympathy in her admiration, but the woods seemed to oppress him, and his panting sigh showed how real a thing was *heimweh*.

'Oh! my poor sun!' he broke out, 'I pity you for having to go down before your time into these black, stifling woods that rise up to smother you like giants—and not into your own broad, cool Atlantic, laughing up your own sparkles of light.'

'We inland people can hardly appreciate your longing for space.'

'It's a very prison,' said Ulick; 'the horizon is

choked all round, and one can't breathe in these staid stiff hedges and enclosures!' And he threw out his arms and flapped them over his breast with a gesture of constraint.

'You seem no friend to cultivation.'

'Why your meadows would be pretty things if they were a little greener,' said Ulick; 'but one gets tired of them, and of those straight lines of ploughed field. There's no sense of liberty; it is like the man whose prison walls closed in upon him!' And he gave another weary sigh, his step lost elasticity, and he moved on heavily.

'You are tired; I have brought you too far.'

'Tired by a bit of a step like this?' cried the boy disdainfully, as he straightened himself, and resumed his brisk tread. But it did not last.

'I had forgotten that you had not been well,' she said.

'Pshaw!' muttered Ulick; then resumed, 'Aye, Mr. Kendal brought in the doctor upon me—very kind of him—but I do assure you 'tis nothing but home sickness; I was nearly as bad when I went to St. Columba, but I got over it then, and I will again!'

'It may be so in part,' said Albinia, kindly; 'but let me be impertinent, Ulick, for my sister Winifred told me to look after you; surely you give it every provocation. Such a change of habits is enough to make any one ill. Should you not ask your uncle for a holiday, and go home for a little while?'

'Don't name it, I beg of you,' cried the poor lad in an agitated voice; 'it would only bring it all over again! I've promised my mother to do my part, and with His help I *will*! Let the columns run out to all eternity, and the figures crook themselves as spitefully as they will, I've vowed to myself not to stir till I've got the better of the villains!'

'Ah!' said Albinia, 'they have blackened your eyes like the bruises of material antagonists! Yes, it is a gallant battle, but indeed you must give yourself all the help you can, for it would be doing your mother no good to fall ill.'

'I've no fears,' said Ulick; 'I know very well what is the matter with me, and that if I don't give way, it will go off in time. You've given it a good shove with your kindness, Mrs. Kendal,' he added, with deep emotion in his sensitive voice; 'only you must not talk of my going home, or you'll undo all you have done.'

'Then I won't; we must try to make you a home here. And in the first place, those lodgings of yours; you can never be comfortable in them.'

'Ah! you saw my fire smoking. I never shall learn to make a coal fire burn.'

'Not only that,' said Albinia, 'but you might easily find rooms much better furnished, and fitter for you.'

'I do assure you,' exclaimed Ulick, 'you scarcely saw it! Why, I don't think there's a room at the big house in better order or so good!'

'At least,' said Albinia, repressing her deduction as to the 'big house of Ballymakilty,' 'you have no particular love for the locality—the river smell—the stock of good leather, &c.'

'It's all Bayford and town smell together,' said Ulick; 'I never thought one part worse than another, begging your pardon, Mrs. Kendal.'

'And I am sure,' she continued, 'that woman can never make your meals comfortable. Yes, I see I am right, and I assure you hard head-work needs good living, and you will never be a match for the rogues in black and white without good beef-steaks. Now confess whether she gives you dinners of old shoe-leather.'

'A man can't sit down to dinner by himself,' cried Ulick, impatiently. 'Tea with a book are all that is bearable.'

'And you never go out—never see any one.'

'I dine at my uncle's every Sunday,' said Ulick.

'Is that all the variety you have?'

'Why, my uncle told me he would not have me getting into what he calls idle company. I've dined once at the vicarage, and drunk tea twice with Mr. Hope, but it is no use thinking of it—I couldn't afford it, and that's the truth.'

‘Have you any books? What can you find to do all the evening?’

‘I have a few that bear reading pretty often, and Mr. Hope has lent me some. I’ve been trying to keep up my Greek, and then I do believe there’s some way of simplifying those accounts by logarithms, if I could but work it out. But my mother told me to walk, and I assure you I do take a constitutional as soon as I come out at half-past four every day.’

‘Well, I have designs, and mind you don’t traverse them, or I shall have to report you at home. I have a lodging in my eye for you, away from the river, and a nice clean, tidy Irishwoman to keep you in order, make your fires, and cram you, if you won’t eat, and see if she does not make a man of you——’

‘Stop, stop, Mrs. Kendal!’ cried Ulick, distressed. ‘You are very kind, but it can’t be.’

‘Excuse me, it is economy of the wrong sort to live in a gutter, and catch agues and fevers. Only think, if it was my boy Gilbert, should I not be obliged to any one that would tyrannize over him for his good? Besides, what I propose is not at all beyond such means as Mr. Kendal tells me are the least Mr. Goldsmith ought to give you. Do you dislike going into particulars with me? You know I am used to think for Gilbert, and I am a sort of cousin.’

‘You are kindness itself,’ said Ulick; ‘and there! I suppose I must go to the bottom of it, and it is no news that pence are not plenty among the O’Mores, though it is no fault of my uncle. See there what my poor dear mother says.’

He drew a letter from his pocket, and gave a page to her.

‘I miss you sorely, my boy,’ it said; ‘I know the more what a support and friend you have been to me now that you are so far away; but all is made up to me in knowing you to be among my own people, and the instrument of reconciliation with my brother, as you well know how great has been the pain of the estrangement caused by my own pride and wilfulness. I cannot tell you how

glad I am that he approves of you, and that you are beginning to get used to the work that was my own poor father's for so long. Bred up as you have been, my mountain lad, I scarcely dared to hope that you would be able to sit down quietly to it, with all our hopes of making you a scholar so suddenly frustrated; but I might have put faith in your loving heart and sense of duty to carry you through anything. I feel as if a load were off my mind since you and Bryan are so happily launched. The boy has not once applied for money since he joined; and if you write to him, pray beg him to be careful, for it would well-nigh drive your father mad to be pressed any more—the poor mare has been sold at a dead loss and the Carrick-humbug quarry company pays no dividends, so how we are to meet the Christmas bills I cannot guess. But, as you remember, we have won over worse times, and now Providence has been so good to you and Bryan, what have I to do but be thankful and hope the best.'

Ulick watched her face, and gave her another note, saying mournfully, 'You see they all, but my mother, think that if I am dragging our family honor through the mire, I've got something by it. Poor Bryan, he knows no better—he's younger than me by two years.'

The young ensign made a piteous confession of the first debt he had been able to contract, for twenty pounds, with a promise that if his brother would help him out of this one scrape, he would never run into another.

'I am very sorry for you, Ulick,' said Albinia, 'and I hate to advise you to be selfish, but it really is quite impossible for you to be paymaster for all your brothers' debts.'

'If it were Connel, I know it would be of no use,' said Ulick. 'But Bryan—you see he has got a start—they gave him a commission, and he is the finest fellow of us all and knows what his word is, and keeps it! Maybe, if I get on, I may be able to save, and help him to his next step, and then if Redmond could get to college, my mother would be a happy woman, and all thanks to my uncle.'

'Then it is this twenty pounds that is pinching you now? Is that it?'

'You see my uncle said he would give me enough to keep me as a gentleman and his nephew, but not enough to keep all the family, as he said. After my Christmas quarter I shall be up in the world again, and then there will be time to think of the woman you spoke of—a Con-naught woman did you say?'

When Albinia reported this dialogue to her husband, he was much moved by this simple self-abnegation,

'There is nothing for it,' he said, 'but to bring him here till Christmas, and by that time we will take care that the new lodgings are cheap enough for him. He must not be left to the mercy of old Goldsmith and his sister!'

Even Albinia was astonished, but Mr. Kendal carried out his intentions, and went in quest of his new friend; while no one thought of objecting except grandmamma.

'I suppose, my dear,' she said, 'that you know what Mr. Goldsmith means to do for this young man.'

'I am sure I don't,' said Albinia.

'Really! Ah! well, I'm an old woman, and I may be wrong, but my poor dear Mr. Meadows would never encourage a banker's clerk about the house unless he knew what were his expectations. Irish too! If there was a thing Mr. Meadows disliked more than another, it was an Irishman! He said they were all adventurers.'

However, Ulick's first evening at Willow Lawn was on what he called 'a headache day.' He could not have taken a better measure for overcoming grandmamma's objections. Poor dear Mr. Meadows' worldly wisdom was not sufficiently native to her to withstand the sight of anything so pale and suffering, especially as he did not rebel against answering her close examination, which concluded in her pronouncing these intermitting attacks to be aguish, and prescribing quinine. To take medicines is an effectual way of gaining an old lady's love. Ulick was soon established in her mind as 'a very pretty behaved young gentleman.'

In the evenings, when Mr. Kendal read aloud, Ulick listened, and enjoyed it from the corner where he sheltered his eyes from the light. He was told that he ought

to go to bed quickly, but after the ladies were in their rooms, a long buzzing murmur was heard in the passage, and judicious peeping revealed the two gentlemen, each, candle in hand, the one with his back against the wall at the top of the stairs, the other leaning upon the balusters three steps below, and there they stayed, till the clock struck one, and Ulick's candle burnt out.

'What could you be talking about?' asked the ag-grieved Albinia.

'*Prometheus Vincit*,' composedly returned Mr. Kendal.

Ulick's eagerness in collecting every crumb of scholarship was a great bond of union; but there was still more in the bright, open, demonstrative nature of the youth, which had a great attraction for the reserved, serious Mr. Kendal, and scarcely a day had passed before they were on terms of intimacy, almost like an elder and younger brother. Admitted into the family as a connexion, Ulick at once viewed the girls as cousins, and treated them with the same easy grace of good-natured familiarity as if they had been any of the nineteen Miss O'Mores around Ballymakilty.

'How is your head now?' asked Mr. Kendal. 'You are late this evening.'

'Yes,' said Ulick, entering the drawing-room, which was ruddy with firelight, and fragrant with the breath of the conservatory, and leaning over an arm-chair, as he tried to rub the aching out of his brow; 'there were some accounts to finish up, and my additions came out different every time.'

'A sure sign that you ought to have left off.'

'I was just going to have told my uncle I was good for nothing to-day, when I heard old Johns mumbling something to him about Mr. More being unwell, and looking up, I saw that cold grey eye twinkling at me, as much as to say he was proud to see how soon an Irishman could be beaten. So what could I do but give him look for look, and go on with eight and seven, and five and two, as unconcerned as he was.'

'Well,' said Mr. Kendal, 'you know I think that your

uncle's apparent indifference may be his fashion of being your best friend.'

'I'd take it like sunshine in May from a stranger, and be proud to disappoint him,' said Ulick; 'but to call himself my uncle, and use my mother's own eyes to look at me that way, that's the stroke! and to think that I'm only striving to harden myself by force of habit to be exactly like him! I'd rather enlist to-morrow, if that would not be his greatest triumph!' he cried, pressing his hands hard on his temples. 'It is very childish, but I could forgive him anything but using my mother's eyes that way!'

'You will yet rejoice in the likeness,' said Mr. Kendal.

'You must believe in more than you can trace, and when your perseverance has conquered his esteem, the rest will follow.'

'Follow? The rest, as you call it, would go before at home,' sighed Ulick, wearily. 'Esteem is like fame! what I want begins without it, and lives as well with or without it!'

'Perhaps,' said his friend, 'Mr. Goldsmith would think it weakness to show preference to a relation before it was earned.'

'Ah then,' cried Ulick, in a quaint Irish tone, 'Heaven have mercy on the little children!'

'Yes, the doctrine can only be consistently held by a solitary man.'

'Where would we be but for inconsistency?' exclaimed Ulick.

'I do not like to hear you talk in that manner,' said Sophy. 'Inconsistency is mere weakness.'

'Ah! then you are the dangerous character,' said Ulick, with a droll gesture of sheltering himself behind the chair.

'I did not call myself consistent, I wish I were,' she said, gravely.

'How she must love the French!' returned Ulick, confidentially turning to her father.

'Not at all, I detest them.'

‘Then you are inconsistent, for they’re the very models of uncompromising consistency.’

‘Yes, to bad principles,’ said Sophy.

‘Robespierre was a prime specimen of consistency to good principle!’

Sophy turned to her father, and with an odd dubious look, asked him, ‘Is he teasing me?’

‘He’d be proud to have the honour,’ Ulick made answer, so that Mr. Kendal’s smile grew broad. It was the funniest thing to see Ulick sporting with Sophy’s gravity, constraining her to playfulness, with something of the compulsion exercised by a large frolicsome puppy upon a sober old dog of less size and strength.

‘I do not like to see powers wasted on paradox,’ she said, even as the grave senior might roll up his lip and snarl.

‘I’m in earnest, Sophy,’ pursued Ulick, changing his note to eagerness. ‘*La grande nation* herself finds that logic was her bane. Consistency was never made for man! Why where would this world be if it did not go two ways at once?’

Sophy did laugh at this Irish version of the centripetal and centrifugal forces, but she held out. ‘The earth describes a circle; I like straight lines.’

‘Much we shall have of the right direction, unless we are content to turn right about face,’ said Ulick. ‘The best path of life is but a herring-bone pattern.’

‘What does he know of herring-boning!’ asked Mrs. Kendal, coming in at the moment, with a white cashmere cloak folded picturesquely over her delicate blue silk. Ulick in a moment assumed a less careless attitude, as he answered—

‘I found my poetical illustration on the motion of the earth too much for her, so I descended to the herring-bone as more suited to her capacity.’

‘There he is, mamma,’ said Sophy, ‘pleading that consistency is the most ruinous thing in the world.’

‘I thought as much,’ said Albinia. ‘Prometheus and his kin do most abound when Ulick’s head is worst, and papa is in greatest danger of being late.’

Mr. Kendal turned round, looked at the time-piece, and marched off.

'But mamma!' continued Sophy, driving straight at her point, 'what do you think of consistency?'

'Oh, mamma!' cried Lucy, coming into the room in a flutter of white; 'there you are in your beautiful blue! Have you really put it on for the Drurys?'

Sophy bit her lip, neither pleased at the interruption, nor at the taste.

'Have you a graduated scale of dresses for all your friends, Lucy?' asked Ulick.

'Everybody has, I suppose,' said Lucy.

'Ah! then I shall know how to judge how I stand in your favour. I never knew so well what the *garb* of friendship meant.'

'You must know which way her scale goes,' said Albinia, laughing at Sophy's evident affront at the frivolous turn the conversation had taken.

'That needs no asking,' quoth Ulick. 'Unadorned, adorned the most for the nearest the hearth.'

'That's all conceit,' said Lucy. 'Maybe familiarity breeds contempt.'

'No, no, when young ladies despise, they use a precision that says, "'Tis myself I care for, and not you.'"

'What an observer!' cried Lucy. 'Now then, interpret my dress to-night!'

'How can you, Lucy?' muttered the scandalized Sophy.

'Well, Sophy, as you will have him to torment with philosophy this whole evening, I think you might give him a little respite,' said Lucy, good-humouredly. 'I want to know what my dress reveals to him!' and drawing up her head, where two coral pins contrasted with her dark braids, and spreading out her full white skirts and cerise trimmings, she threw her figure into an attitude, and darted a merry challenge from her lively black eyes, while Ulick availed himself of the permission to look critically, and Sophy sank back disgusted.

'Miss Kendal can, when she is inclined, produce as much effect with her beams of the second order as with all her splendours displayed.'

‘Stuff,’ said Lucy.

‘Stuff indeed,’ more sincerely murmured Sophy.

‘Say something in earnest,’ said Lucy. ‘You professed to tell what I thought of the people.’

‘I hope you’ll never put on such new white gloves where I’m the party chiefly concerned.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘They are a great deal too unexceptionable.’

If there were something coquettish in the manner of these two, it did not give Albinia much concern. It was in him ‘only Irish;’ and Fred Ferrars had made her believe that it was rather a sign of the absence of love than of its presence. She saw much more respect and interest in his mischievous attacks on Sophy’s gravity, and though Lucy both pitied him and liked chattering with him, it was all the while under the secret protest that he was only a banker’s clerk.

Sophy was glad of the presence of a third person to obviate the perils of her evenings with grandmamma, and she beheld the trio set off to their dinner-party, without the usual dread of being betrayed into wrangling. Mr. O’More devoted himself to the old lady’s entertainment; he amused her with droll stories, and played backgammon with her. Then she composed herself to her knitting, and desired them not to mind her, she liked to hear young people talk cheerfully; whereupon Sophy, by way of light and cheerful conversation, renewed the battle of consistency with a whole broadside of heavy metal.

When the diners-out came home, they found the war raging as hotly as ever; a great many historical facts and wise sayings having been fired off on both sides, and neither having found out that each meant the same thing.

However, the hours had gone imperceptibly past them, which could not be said for the others. The half-yearly dinners at Mr. Drury’s were Albinia’s dread nearly as much as Mr. Kendal’s aversion. He was certain, whatever he might intend, to fall into a fit of absence, and she was almost equally sure to hear something unpleasant, and to regret her own reply. On the whole, however, Mr. Kendal came away on this evening the least

dissatisfied, for Mr. Goldsmith had asked him with some solicitude, whether he thought 'that lad, young More,' positively unwell; and had gone the length of expressing that he seemed to be fairly sharp, and stuck to his work. Mr. Kendal seized the moment for telling his opinion of Ulick, and though Mr. Goldsmith coughed and looked dry and almost contemptuous, he was perceptibly gratified, and replied with a maxim evidently intended both as an excuse for himself and as a warning to the Kendals, that young men were always spoilt by being made too much of—in his younger days—&c.

Lucy, meantime, was undergoing the broad banter of her unrefined cousins on the subject of the Irish clerk. A very little grace in the perpetration would have made it grateful to her vanity, but this was far too broad railery, and made her hold up her head with protestations of her perfect indifference, to which her cousins manifested incredulity, visiting on her with some petty spite their small jealousies of her higher pretensions, and of the attention which had been paid to her by Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy.

'Not that he will ever look at you again, Lucy, you need not flatter yourself,' said the amiable Sarah Anne. 'Harry Wolfe writes that he was flirting with a beautiful young lady who came to see Oxford, and that he is spending quantities of money.'

'It is nothing to me, I am sure,' retorted Lucy. 'Besides, Gilbert says no such thing.'

'Gilbert! oh, no!' exclaimed Miss Drury; 'why, he is just as bad himself. Papa said, from what Mrs. Wolfe told him, he would not take £500 to pay Mr. Gilbert's bills.'

Albinia had been hearing much the same story from Mrs. Drury, though not so much exaggerated, and administered with more condolence. She did not absolutely believe, and yet she could not utterly disbelieve, so the result was a letter to Gilbert, with an anxious exhortation to be careful, and not to be deluded into foolish expenditure in imitation of the Polysyllable; and as no special answer was returned, she dismissed the whole from her mind as a Drury allegation.

The horse chanced to be lame, so that Gilbert could not be met at Haduinster on his return from Oxford; but much earlier than the omnibus usually lumbered into Bayford, he astonished Sophy, who was lying on the sofa in the morning-room, by marching in with a free and easy step, and a loose coat of the most novel device.

'No one else at home?' he asked.

'Only grandmamma. We did not think the omnibus would come in so soon, but I suppose you took a fly, as there were three of you.'

'As if we were going to stand six miles of bus with the Wolfe cub! No, Dusautoy brought his horse down with him, and I took a fly!' said Gilbert. 'Well, and what's the matter with Captain; has the Irishman been riding him?'

Sophy bit her lip to prevent an angry answer, and was glad that Maurice rushed in, full of uproarious joy. 'Hollo! boy, how you grow! What have you got there?'

'It's my new pop-gun that Ulick made me; I'll shoot you,' cried Maurice, retiring to a suitable distance.

'I declare the child has caught the brogue! Is the fellow here still?'

'What fellow?' coldly asked Sophy.

'Why, this pet of my father's.'

'Bang!' cried Maurice, and a pellet passed perilously close to Gilbert's eyes.

'Don't, child. Pray is this banker's clerk one of our fixtures, Sophy?'

'I don't know why you despise him, unless it is because it is what you ought to be yourself,' Sophy was provoked into retorting.

'Apparently my father has a monomania for the article.' Gilbert intended to speak with provoking coolness; but another fraternal pellet hit him full in the nose, and the accompanying shout of glee was too much for an already irritated temper. With passion most unusual in him, he caught hold of the child, and exclaiming, 'You little imp, what do you mean by it?' he wrenched the weapon out of his hand, and dashed it into the fire, in the

midst of an energetic 'For shame!' from his sister. Maurice, with a furious 'Naughty Gilbert,' struck at him with both his little fists clenched, and then precipitated himself over the fender to snatch his treasure from the grate, but was instantly captured and pulled back, struggling, kicking, and fighting with all his might, till, to the equal relief of both brothers, Sophy held up the pop-gun in the tongs, one end still tinged with a red glow, smoky, blackened and perfumed. Maurice made one bound, she lowered it into his grasp as the last red spark died out, and he clasped it as Siegfried did the magic sword!

'There, Maurice, I didn't mean it,' said Gilbert, heartily ashamed and sorry; 'kiss and make it up, and then put on your hat, and we'll come up to old Smith's and get such a jolly one!'

The forgiving child had already given the kiss, glad to atone for his aggressions, but then was absorbed in rubbing the charred wood, amazed that while so much black came off on his fingers, the effect on the weapon was not proportionate, and then tried another shot in a safer direction. 'Come,' said Gilbert, 'put that black affair into the fire and come along.'

'No!' said Maurice; 'it is my dear gun that Ulick made me, and it shan't be burnt.'

'What, not if I give you a famous one—like a real one, with a stock and barrel?' said Gilbert, anxious to be freed from the tokens of his ebullition.

'No! no!' still stoutly said the constant Maurice. 'I don't want new guns; I've got my dear old one, and I'll keep him to the end of his days and mine!' and he crossed his arms over it.

'That's right, Maurice,' said Sophy; 'stick to old friends that have borne wounds in your service!'

'Well, it's his concern if he likes such a trumpery old thing,' said Gilbert. 'Come here, boy; you don't bear malice! Come and have a ride on my back.'

The practical lesson, 'don't shoot at your brother's nose,' would never have been impressed, had not mamma, on coming in, found Maurice and his pop-gun nearly equally black, and by gradual unfolding of cause and

effect, learnt his forgotten offence. She reminded him of ancient promises never to aim at human creatures ; assured him that Gilbert was very kind not to have burnt it outright ; and to the great displeasure, and temporary relief of all the family, sequestered the weapon for the rest of the evening.

Sophy told her in confidence that Gilbert had been the most to blame, which she took as merely an instance of Sophy's blindness to Maurice's errors ; for the explosion had so completely worked off the Oxford dash, that he was perfectly meek and amiable. Considering the antecedents, such a contrast to himself as young O'More could hardly fail to be an eyesore, walking tame about the house, and specially recommended to his friendship ; but so good-natured was he, and so attractive was the Irishman, that it took much influence from Algernon Dusautoy to keep up a thriving aversion. Albinia marvelled at the power exercised over Gilbert by one whose intellect and pretensions he openly contemned, but perceived that obstinacy and undoubting self-satisfaction overmastered his superior intelligence and principle, and that while perceiving all the follies of the Polysyllable, Gilbert had a strange propensity for his company, and therein always resumed the fast man, disdainful of the clerk. He did not like Ulick better for being the immediate cause of the removal of the last traces of the Belmarché family from their old abode, which had been renovated by pretty shamrock chintz furniture, the pride of the two Irish hearts. Indeed it was to be feared that Bridget would assist in the perpetuation of those rolling r's which caused Mr. Goldsmith's brow to contract whenever his nephew careered along upon one.

His departure from Willow Lawn was to take place at Christmas. The Ferrars party were coming to keep the two consecutive birthdays of Sophy and Maurice at Bayford, would take him back for Christmas-day to Fairmead, and on his return he would take possession of his new rooms.

Maurice's fête was to serve as the occasion of paying off civilities to a miscellaneous young party ; but as

grandmamma's feelings would have been hurt, had not Sophy's been equally distinguished, it was arranged that Mrs. Nugent should then bring her eldest girl to meet the Ferrarses at an early tea.

Just as Albinia had descended to await her guests, Glibert came down and presently said, with would-be indifference, 'Oh, by-the-by, Dusautoy said he would look in.'

'The Polysyllable!' cried Albinia, thunderstruck; 'what possessed you to ask him, when you knew I sacrificed Mr. Dusautoy rather than have him to spoil it all!'

'I didn't ask him exactly,' replied Gilbert; 'it was old Bowles, who met us, and tried to nail us to eat our mutton with him, as he called it. I had my answer, and Dusautoy got off by saying he was engaged to us, and desired me to tell you he would make his excuses in person.'

'He can make no excuse for downright falsehood.'

'Hem!' quoth Gilbert. 'You wouldn't have him done into drinking old Bowles's surgery champagne.'

'One comfort is that he won't get any dinner,' said Albinia, vindictively. 'I hope he'll be ravenously hungry.'

'He may not come after all,' said Gilbert; and Albinia, laying hold of that hope, had nearly forgotten the threatened disaster, as her party appeared by instalments, and Winifred owned to her that Sophy had grown better-looking than could have been expected. Her eyes had brightened, the cloudy brown of her cheeks was enlivened, she held herself better, and the less childish dress was much to her advantage. But above all, the moody look of suffering was gone, and her face had something of the grave sweetness and regular beauty of that of her father. 'Seventeen,' said Mrs. Ferrars; 'by the time she is seventy, she may be a remarkably handsome woman!'

The tea-drinking was in lively operation, when after a thundering knock, Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy was ushered in, with the air of a prince honouring the banquet of his vassals, saying, 'I told Kendal I should presume on your hospitality, I beg you will make no difference on my account.'

Of which gracious permission Albinia was resolved to avail herself. She left all the insincerity to her husband, and would by no means allow grandmamma to abdicate the warm corner. She suspected that he wanted an introduction to Mrs. Nugent, and was resolved to defeat this object, unless he should condescend to make the request, so she was well satisfied to see him wedged in between papa and Sophy, while a prodigious quantity of Irish talk was going on between Mrs. Nugent and Mr. O'More, with contributions of satire from Mr. Ferrars which kept every one laughing except little Nora Nugent and Mary Ferrars, who were deep in the preliminaries of an eternal friendship, and held the ends of each other's crackers, like a pair of doves. Lucy, however, was ill at ease at the obscurity which shrouded the illustrious guest, and in her anxiety, gave so little attention to her two neighbours, that Willie Ferrars, affronted at some neglect, exclaimed, 'Why, Lucy, what makes you screw your eyes about so? you can't attend to any one.'

'It is because Polly Silly is there,' shouted Master Maurice from his throne beside his mamma.

To the infinite relief of the half-choked Albinia, little Mary Ferrars, with whom her cousin had been carrying on a direful warfare all day, fitted on the cap, shook her head gravely at him, and after an appealing look of indignation, first at his mamma, then at her own, was overheard confiding to Nora Nugent that Maurice was a very naughty boy—she was sorry to say, a regular spoilt child.

'But how should you hinder Miss Kendal from attending?'

'I'll tell you, darling. Poor Lucy! she is very fond of me, and I dare say she wanted me to sit next to her, but you know she will have me for three days, and I have you only this one evening. I'll go and speak to her after tea, when we go into the drawing-room, and then she won't mind.'

Lucy, after an agony of blushes, had somewhat recovered on finding that no one seemed to apply her brother's speech, and when the benevolent Mary made

her way to her, and thrust a hand into hers, only a feeble pressure replied to these romantic blandishments, so anxious was she to carry to Mrs. Kendal the information that Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy had been so obliging as to desire his servant to bring his guitar and key-bugle.

'We are much obliged,' said Albinia; 'but look at that face!' and she turned Lucy towards Willie's open-mouthed, dismayed countenance. 'You must tell him the company are not sufficiently advanced in musical science.'

'But, mamma, it would gratify him!'

'Very likely'—and without listening further, Albinia turned to Willie, who had all day been insisting that papa should introduce her to the new game of the Showman.

Infinitely delighted to be relieved from the fear of the guitar, Willie hunted all who would play into another room; whence they were to be summoned, one by one, back to the drawing-room by the showman, Mr. Ferrars, who shrugged his shoulders at the task, but undertook it, and first called for Mrs. Kendal.

She found him stationed before the red curtains, which were closely drawn, and her husband and the three elder ladies sitting by as audience.

'Pray, madam, may I ask what animal you would desire to have exhibited to you, out of the vast resources that my menagerie contains? Choose freely, I undertake that whatever you may select, you shall not be disappointed.'

'What, not if I were to ask for a black spider monkey?' said Albinia, to whom it was very charming to be playing with Maurice again.

Mr. Kendal looked up in entertained curiosity, Mrs. Nugent smiled as if she thought the showman's task impossible, and Winifred stretched out to gain a full view.

'A black spider monkey,' he said, slowly. 'Allow me to ask, madam, if you are acquainted with the character of the beast?'

'It doesn't scratch, does it?' said she, quickly.

'That is for you to answer.'

'I never knew it to do so. It does chatter a great deal, but it never scratched that I knew of.'

‘Nor I,’ said the showman, ‘since it was young. Do you think age renders it graver and steadier?’

‘Not a bit. It is always frisky and troublesome, and I never knew it get a bit better as it grew older.’

Winifred laughed outright. Mr. Kendal’s lips were parted by his smile. ‘I wonder what sort of a mother it would make!’ said the showman.

‘All animals are good mothers, of course.’

‘I meant, is it a good disciplinarian?’

‘If you mean cuffing its young one for playing exactly the same tricks as itself.’

‘Exactly; and what would be the effect of letting it and its young one loose in a great scholar’s study?’

‘There wouldn’t be much study left.’

‘And would it be for his good?’

‘Really, Mr. Showman, you ask very odd questions. Shall we try?’ said Albinia, with a skip backward, so as to lay her hand on the shoulder of her own great scholar, while the showman drew back the curtain, observing—‘I wish, ma’am I could show “it and its young one” together, but the young specimen is unfortunately asleep. Behold the original black spider monkey!’

There stood the monkey, with sunny brown locks round the laughing glowing face, and one white paw still lying on the scholar’s shoulder—while his face made no assurance needful that it was *very* good for him! The mirror concealed behind the curtains was the menagerie! Albinia clapped her hands with delight, and pronounced it the most perfect of games.

‘And now let us have Willie,’ said Mrs. Ferrars; ‘it will conduce to the harmony of the next room.’

Willie, already initiated, hoped to puzzle papa as a *platypus ornithoryncus*, but was driven to allow that it was a nondescript animal, neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring, useless, and very fond of grubbing in the mud; and if it were not at Botany Bay, it ought to be! The laughter that hailed his defence of its nose as ‘well, nothing particular,’ precipitated the drawing up of the curtain and his apparition in the glass: and then Nora Nugent being called, the inseparable Mary accompanied

her, arm-in-arm; simpering an announcement that they liked nothing so well as a pair of dear little love-birds.

Oh, unpitiful papa! to draw from the unsuspecting Nora the admission that they were very dull little birds, of no shape at all, who always sat hunched up in a corner without any fun, and people said their love was all stupidity and pretence; in fact, if she had one she should call it Silly Polly or Polly Silly!

To silence Willie's exultation in his sister's discomfiture, he was sent to fetch Lucy, whose impersonation of an argus pheasant would not have answered well but for a suggestion of Albinia, that she was eyes all over for any delinquency in school. Ulick O'More, owning with a sigh that he should like to see no beast better than a snipe, gave rise to much ingenuity by being led to describe it as of a class migratory, hard to catch, food for powder, given to long bills. There he guessed something, and stood on the defensive, but could not deny that its element was bogs, but that it had been seen skimming over water meadows, and finding sustenance in banks, whereupon the curtain rose. Ulick rushed upon the battles of his nation, and was only reduced to quiescence by the entrance of Sophy, who expressed a desire to see a coral worm, apparently perplexing the showman, who, to gain time, hemmed, and said, 'A very unusual species, ma'am;' which set all the younger ones in a double giggle, such as confused Sophy, to find herself standing up, with every one looking at her, and listening for her words. 'I thought you undertook for any impossibility in earth, air, or water.'

'Well, ma'am, do you take me for a mere mountebank? But when ladies and gentlemen take such unusual fancies—and for an animal that—you would not aver that it is often found from home!'

'Never, I should say.'

'Nor that it is accessible?'

'Certainly not.'

'And why is it so, ma'am?'

'Why,' said Sophy, bewildered into forgetting her natural history, 'it lives at the bottom of the sea; that's one thing.'

'Where Truth lives,' said a voice behind.

'I beg to differ,' observed Albinia. 'Truth is a freshwater fish at the bottom of a well; besides, I thought coral worms were always close to the surface.'

'But below it—not in everybody's view,' said Sophy—an answer which seemed much to the satisfaction of the audience, but the showman insisted on knowing why, and whether it did not conceal itself. 'It makes stony caves for itself, out of sight,' said Sophy, almost doubting whether she spoke correctly. 'Well, surely it does so.'

'Most surely,' said an acclamation so general that she did not like it. If she had been younger, she would have turned sulky upon the spot, and Mr. Ferrars almost doubted whether to bring out his final query. Pray, ma'am, do you think this creature out of reach in its self-made cave, at the bottom—no, below the surface of the sea, would be popular enough to repay the cost of procuring it?'

'Ah! that's too bad,' burst out the Hibernian tones. 'Why, is not the best of everything hidden away from the common eye? Out of sight—stony cave—It is the secret worker that lays the true solid foundation, raises the new realms, and forms the precious jewels.' The torrent of r's was irresistible!

'Police! order!' cried the showman. 'An Irish mob has got in, and there's an end of everything.' So up went the curtain, and the polyp appeared, becoming rapidly red coral as she perceived what the exhibition was, and why the politeness of the green isle revolted from her proclaiming her own unpopularity. But all she did was to turn gruffly aside, and say, 'It is lucky there are no more ladies to come, Mr. Showman, or the mob would turn everything to a compliment.'

Gilbert's curiosity was directed to the Laughing Jack-ass, and with too much truth he admitted that it took its tone from whatever it associated with, and caught every note, from the song of the lark to the bray of the donkey; then laughed good-humouredly when the character was fitted upon himself.

'That is all, is it not?' asked the showman. 'I may retire into private life.'

'Oh no,' cried Willie; 'you have forgotten Mr. Dusautoy.'

'I was afraid you had,' said Lucy, 'or you could not have left him to the last.'

'I am tempted to abdicate,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'No,' Albinia said. 'He must have his share, and no one but you can do it. Where can he be? the pause becomes awful!'

'Willie is making suggestions,' said Gilbert; 'his imagination would never stretch farther than a lion. It's what he thinks himself and no mistake.'

'He is big enough to be the elephant,' said little Mary.

'The half-reasoning?' said Ulick, softly; 'and I can answer for his trunk, I saw it come off the omnibus.'

'Ladies and gentlemen, if you persist in such disorderly conduct, the exhibition will close,' cried the showman, waving his wand as Willie trumpeted Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy in, and on the demand what animal he wanted to see, twitched him as Flibbertygibbet did the giant warder, and caused him to respond—'The Giraffe.'

'Has it not another name, sir? A short or a long one, more or less syllables!'

'Camelopard. A polysyllabic word, certainly,' said Algernon, looking with a puzzled expression at the laughers behind; and almost imagining it possible that he could have made an error, he repeated, 'Camel-le-o-pard. Yes, it is a polysyllable'—as, indeed, he had added an unnecessary syllable.

'Most assuredly,' said the showman, looking daggers at his suffocating sister. 'May I ask you to describe the creature?'

'Seventeen feet from the crown to the hoof, but falls off behind,' said the accurate Mr. Dusautoy; 'beautiful tawny color.'

'Nearly as good as a Lion,' added Gilbert; but Algernon, fancying the game was by way of giving useful instruction to the children, went on in full swing. 'Handsomely mottled with darker brown; a ruminating animal; so gentle that in spite of its size, none of my little friends

need be alarmed at its vicinity. Inhabits the African deserts, but may be bred in more temperate latitudes. I myself saw an individual in the *Jardin des Plantes*, which was popularly said never to bend its neck to the ground, but I consider this a vulgar delusion, for on offering it food, it mildly inclined its head.'

'Let us hope the present specimen is equally condescending,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'Eh? what? I see myself!' said Mr. Cavendish Dusauroy, with a tone so inappreciably grand in mystification, that the showman had no choice but to share the universal convulsion of laughter, while Willie rolling on the floor with ecstasy, shouted, 'Yes, it is you that are the thing with such a long name that it can't bend its head to the ground!'

'But too good-natured to be annoyed at folly,' said Mr. Ferrars, perceiving that it was no sport to him.

'This is the way my mischievous uncle has served us all in turn,' said Lucy, advancing; 'we have all been shown up, and there was mamma a monkey, and I an argus pheasant—'

'Ah! I see,' said the gentleman. 'These are your rural pastimes of the season. Yes, I can take my share in good part, just as I have pelted the masks at the Carnival.'

'Even a giraffe can bend his head and do at Rome as Rome does,' murmured Ulick. But instead of heeding the audacious Irishman, Algernon patronized the showman by thanks for his exhibition; and then sitting down by Lucy, asked if he had ever told her of the tricks that he and il Principe Odorico Moretti used to play at Ems on the old Baron Sprawlowsky, while Mr. Ferrars, leaning over his sister's chair, said aside, 'I beg your pardon, Albinia; I should not have yielded to Willie. This "rural pastime" is only in season *en famille*.'

'Never mind; it served him right.'

'It may have served him right, but had we the right to serve him?'

'I forgive your prudence for the sake of your folly. Could not Oxford have lessened his pomposity?'

‘It comes too late,’ said Maurice.

Before Ulick went to bed his pen and ink had depicted the entire caravan. The love-birds were pressed up together, with the individual features of the two young ladies, and completely little parrots; the snipe ran along the bars of the cage, looking exactly like all the O’Mores. The monkey showed nothing but the hands, but one held Maurice, and the other was clenched as if to cuff him, and grandest of all was, as in duty bound, *Camelopardelis giraffa*, thrown somewhat backwards, with such a majestic form, such a stalking attitude, loftily ruminating face, and legs so like the Cavendish Dusautoy’s last new pair of trowsers, that Albinia could not help reserving it for the private delectation of his Aunt Fanny.

‘It and its young one,’ said Mr. Kendal, as he looked at her portrait; and the name delighted him so much, that he for some time applied it with a smile whenever his wife gave him cause to remember how much there was of the monkey in her composition.

It was the merriest Christmas ever known at Willow Lawn, and the first time there had been anything of the atmosphere of family frolic and fun. The lighting up of Sophy was one great ingredient; hitherto mirth had been merely endured by her, whereas now, improved health and spirits had made her take her share, amuse others and be amused, and cease to be hurt by the jarring of chance words. Lucy was lively as usual, but rather more excited than Albinia altogether liked; she was doubly particular about her dress; more disdainful of the common herd, and had a general air of exaltation that made Albinia rejoice when the Polysyllable, the horses, the key-bugle, and genre painting disappeared from the Bayford horizon.

CHAPTER XX.

If the end of the vacation were a relief on Lucy's account, Albinia would gladly have lengthened it on Gilbert's. Letters from his tutor had disquieted his father; there had been an expostulation followed by promises, and afterwards one of the usual scenes of argument, complaint, excuse, lamentation, and wish to amend; but lastly, a murmur that it was no use to talk to a father who had never been at the University, and did not know what was expected of a man.

The aspect of Oxford had changed in Albinia's eyes since the days of her brother. Alma Mater had been a vision of pealing bells, chanting voices, cloistered shades, bright waters—the source of her most cherished thoughts, the abode of youth walking in the old paths of pleasantness and peace; and she knew that to faithful hearts, old Oxford was still the same. But to her present anxious gaze it had become a field of snares and temptations, whither she had been the means of sending one, unguarded and unstable.

Once under the influence of a good sound-hearted friend, he might have been easily led right, but his intimacy with young Dusautoy seemed to cancel all hope of this, and to be like a rope about his neck, drawing him into the same career, and keeping aloof all better influences. Algernon, with his pride, pomposity, and false refinement, was more likely to run into ostentatious expenditure, than into coarse dissipation, and it might still be hoped that the two youths would drag through without public disgrace; but this was felt to be a very poor hope by those who felt each sin to be a fatal blot, and trembled at the self-indulgent way of life that might be a more fatal injury than even the ban of the authorities.

She saw that the anxiety pressed heavily on Mr. Kendal, and though both shrank from giving their uneasiness force by putting it into words, each felt that it was ever-present with the other. Mr. Kendal was deeply grieving over the effects; for the former state of ignorance and

apathy of the evils of which he had only recently become fully sensible. Living for himself alone, without cognizance of his membership in one great universal system, he had needed the sense of churchmanship to make him act up to his duties as father, neighbour, citizen, and man of property ; and when aroused, he found that the time of his inaction had bound him about with fetters. A tone of mind had grown up in his family from which only Sophy had been entirely freed ; seeds of ineradicable evil had been sown, mischiefs had grown by neglect, abuses been established by custom ; and his own personal disadvantages, his *mauvaise honte*, his reserved, apparently proud manner, his slowness of speech, dislike to interruption, and over-vehemence when excited, had so much increased upon him, as, in spite of his efforts, to be serious hindrances. Kind, liberal, pains-taking, and conscientious as he had become, he was still looked upon as hard, stern, and tyrannical. His ten years of inertness had strewn his path with thorns and briars, even beyond his own household ; and when he looked back to his neglect of his son, he felt that even the worse consequences would be but just retribution.

Once such feelings would have wrapt him in morbid gloom ; now he strove against his disposition to sit inert and hidden, he did his work manfully, and endeavoured not to let his want of spirits sadden the household.

Nor was he insensible to the cheerful healthy atmosphere of animation which had diffused itself there ; and the bright discussions of the trifling interests of the day. Ulick O'More was also a care to him ; which did him a great deal of good.

That young gentleman now lived at his lodgings, but was equally at home at Willow Lawn, and his knock at the library door, when he wished to change a book, usually led to some 'Prometheus' discussion, and sometimes to a walk, if Mr. Kendal thought him looking pale ; or to dining and to spending the evening.

His scrapes were peculiar. He had thoroughly mastered his work, and his active mind wanted farther scope, so that he threw himself with avidity into deeper studies ;

and once fell into horrible disgrace for being detected with a little Plato on his desk. Mr. Goldsmith nearly gave him up in despair, and pronounced that he would never make a man of business. He made matters worse by replying that this was the best chance of his not being a man of speculation. If he were allowed to think of nothing but money he should speculate for the sake of something to do!

Before Mr. Goldsmith had half recovered the shock, Mr. Dusautoy and Mr. Hope laid violent hands upon young O'More for the evening school twice a week which almost equally discomposed his aunt. She had never got over the first blow of Mr. Dusautoy's innovations, and felt as if her nephew had gone over to the enemy. She was doubly ungracious at the Sunday dinner, and venomously critical of the choir's chanting, Mr. Hope's voice, and the Vicar's sermons.

The worst scrape came in March. The Willow Lawn ladies were in the lower end of the garden, which, towards the river, was separated from the lane that continued Tibbs's Alley, by a low wall surmounted by spikes, and with a disused wicket, always locked, and nearly concealed by a growth of laurels; when out broke a horrible hullabaloo in that region of evil report, the shouts and yells coming nearer, and becoming so distinct that they were about to retreat, when suddenly a dark figure leapt over the gate, and into the garden, amid a storm of outcries. As he disappeared among the laurels, Albinia caught up Maurice, Lucy screamed and prepared to fly, and Sophy started forward, exclaiming, 'It is Ulick, mamma; his face is bleeding!' But as he emerged, she retreated, for she had a nervous terror of the canine race, and in his hand, at arm's length, he held by the neck a yellow dog, a black pot dangling from its tail.

'Take care,' he shouted, as Albinia set down Maurice and was running up to him; 'he may be mad.'

Maurice was caught up again, Lucy shrieked, and Sophy, tottering against an apple-tree, faintly said, 'He has bitten you!'

'No, not he; it was only a stone,' said Ulick, as best

he might, with a fast bleeding upper lip. 'They were hunting the poor beast to death—I believe he's no more mad than I am—only with the fright—but best make sure.'

'Fetch some milk, Lucy,' said Albinia. 'Take Maurice with you. No, don't take the poor thing down to the river; he'll only think you are going to drown him. Go, Maurice dear.'

Maurice safe, Albinia was able to find ready expedients after Sir Fowell Buxton's celebrated example. She brought Ulick the gardener's thick gauntlets from the tool-house, and supplied him with her knife, with which he set the poor creature free from the instrument of torture, and then let him loose, with a pan of milk before him, in the old-fashioned summer-house, through the window of which he could observe his motions, and if he looked dangerous, shoot him.

Nothing could look less dangerous; the poor creature sank down on the floor and moaned, licked its hind leg, and then dragged itself as if famished to the milk, lapped a little eagerly, but lay down again whining, as if in pain. Ulick and Albinia called to it, and it looked up and tried to wag its tail, whining appealingly. 'My poor brute!' he cried, 'they've treated you worse than a heathen. That's all—let me see what I can do for you.'

'Yes, but yourself, Ulick,' said Albinia, as in his haste he took down his handkerchief from his mouth; 'I do believe your lip is cut through! You had better attend to that first.'

'No, no, thank you,' said Ulick, eagerly; 'they've broken the poor wretch's leg!' and he was the next moment sitting on the summer-house floor, lifting up the animal tenderly, regardless of her expostulation that the injured, frightened creature might not know its friends. But she did it injustice; it wagged its stumpy tail, and licked his fingers.

She offered to fetch rag for his surgery, and he further begged for some slight bits of wood to serve as splints; he and his brothers had been dog-doctors before. As she hurried into the house, Sophy, who had sunk on a sofa in

the drawing-room, looking deadly pale, called out, 'Is he bitten?'

'No, no,' cried Albinia, hurrying on; 'the dog is all safe. It has only got a broken leg.'

Maurice, with whom Lucy had all this time been fighting, came out with her to see the rest of the adventure; and thought it very cruel that he was not permitted to touch the patient, which bore the operation with affecting fortitude and gratitude, and was then consigned to a basket lined with hay, and left in the summer-house, Mr. Kendal being known to have an almost eastern repugnance to dogs.

Then Ulick had leisure to be conducted to the morning-room, and he rendered a less ghastly spectacle, by some very uncomfortable sticking-plaster moustaches, which hardly permitted him to narrate his battle distinctly. He thought the boys, even of Tibbs's Alley, would hardly have ventured any violence after he had interfered, but for some young men who ought to have known better; he fancied he had seen young Tritton of Robble's Leigh, and he was sure of an insolent groom whom Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy, to the great vexation of his uncle, had recently sent down with a horse to the King's Head. They had stimulated the boys to a shout of Paddy and a shower of stones, and Ulick expected credit for great discretion in having fled instead of fought. 'Ah! if Brian and Connel had but been there, wouldn't we have put them to the rout?'

Nothing would then serve him but going back to Tibbs's Alley to trace the dog's history; and meantime Lucy, from the end of the passage, beckoned to Albinia, and whispered mysteriously that 'Sophy would not have any one know it for the world—but,' said Lucy, 'I found her absolutely fainting away on the sofa, only she would not let me call you, and ordered that no one should know anything about it. But, mamma, there was a red-hot knitting-needle sticking out of the fire, and I am quite sure that she meant if Ulick was bitten, to burn out the place.'

Albinia believed Sophy capable of both the resolution and its consequence; but she agreed with Lucy that no

notice should be taken, and would not seem aware that Sophy was much paler than usual.

The dog, as well as Ulick could make out, was a waif or stray, belonging to a gipsy deported that morning by the police, and on whom its master's sins had been visited. So without scruple he carried the basket home to his lodgings, and on the way, had the misfortune to encounter his uncle, while shirtfront, coat, and waistcoat were fresh from the muddy and bloody fray, and his visage in the height of disfigurement.

Mr. Goldsmith looked on the whole affair as an insult to every Goldsmith of past ages! A mere street row! He ordered Mr. More to his lodgings, and said he should hear from him to-morrow. Ulick came down to Willow Lawn in the dark, almost considering himself as dismissed, not knowing whether to be glad or sorry; and wanting to consult Mr. Kendal whether it would be possible to work his way at college as Mr. Hope had done, or even wondering whether he might venture to beg for a recommendation to 'Kendal and Kendal.'

Mr. Kendal was so strongly affected, that he took up his hat and went straight to Mr. Goldsmith, 'to put the matter before him in a true light.'

True light or false, it was intolerable in the banker's eyes, and it took a great deal of eloquence to persuade him that his nephew was worth a second trial. Fighting in Tibbs's Alley over a gipsy's dog, and coming back looking like a ruffian! Mr. Goldsmith wished him no harm, but it would be a disgrace to the concern to keep him on, and Miss Goldsmith, whom Mr. Kendal heartily wished to gag, chimed in with her old predictions of the consequences of her poor sister's foolish marriage. The final argument, was Mr. Kendal's declaration of the testimonials with which he would at once send him out to Calcutta, to take the situation once offered to his own son. No sooner did Mr. Goldsmith hear that his nephew had an alternative, than he promised to be lenient, and finally dispatched a letter to U. More, Esquire, with a very serious rebuke, but a promise that his conduct should be overlooked, provided the scandal were not repeated, and

he should not present himself at the bank till his face should be fit to be seen.

Mr. Kendal mounted him the next morning on Gilbert's horse, and sent him to Fairmead. The dog was left in charge of Bridget, who treated it with abundant kindness, but failed to obtain the exclusive affection which the poor thing lavished upon its rescuer. By the time Ulick came home, it had arrived at limping upon three legs, and was bent on following him wherever he went. Disreputable and heinously ugly it was, of tawny currish yellow (whence it was known as the Orangeman), with a bull-dog countenance; and the legs that did not limp, were bandy. Albinia called it the Tripod, but somehow it settled into the title of Hyder Ali, to which it was said to 'answer' the most readily, though it would in fact answer anything from Ulick, and nothing from any one else.

Ever at his heels, the 'brazen Tripod' contrived to establish an entrance at Willow Lawn; scratched till Mr. Kendal would interrupt a 'Prometheus talk' to let him in at the library door; and gradually made it a matter of course to come into the drawing-room, and repose upon Sophy's flounces.

This was by way of compensation for his misadventures elsewhere. He was always bringing Ulick into trouble; shut or tie him up as he might, he was sure to reappear when least wanted. He had been at church, he had been in Miss Goldsmith's drawing-room, he had been found times without number curled up under Ulick's desk. Mr. Goldsmith growled hints about hanging him, and old Mr. Johns, who really was fond of his bright young fellow-clerk, gave grave counsel; but Ulick only loved his protégé the better, and after having exhausted an Irish vocabulary of expostulation, succeeded in prevailing on him to come no farther than the street; except on very wet days, when he would sometimes be found on the mat in the entry, looking deplorably beseeching, and bringing on his master an irate, 'Here's that dog again!'

'Would that no one fell into worse scrapes,' sighed Mr. Dusautoy, when he heard of Ulick's disasters with Hyder Ali; and it was a sigh that the house of Kendal re-echoed.

Nobody could be surprised when, towards the long vacation, tidings came to Bayford, that after long forbearance on the part of the authorities, the insubordination and riotous conduct of the two young men could be endured no longer. It appeared that young Dusautoy, with his weak head and obstinate will, had never attempted to bend to rules, but had taken every reproof as an insult and defiance. Young men had not been wanting who were ready to take advantage of his lavish expenditure, and to excite his disdain for authorities. They had promoted the only wit he did understand, broad practical jokes and mischief; and had led him into the riot and gambling to which he was not naturally prone. Gilbert Kendal, with more sense and principle, had been led on by the contagion around him, and at last an outrageous wine party had brought matters to a crisis. The most guilty were the most cunning, and the only two to whom the affair could actually be brought home, were Dusautoy and Kendal. The sentence was rustication, and the tutor wrote to Mr. Dusautoy, as the least immediately affected, to ask him to convey the intelligence to Mr. Kendal.

The Vicar was not a man to shrink from any task, however painful, but he felt it the more deeply, as, in spite of his partiality, he was forced to look on his own favourite Algernon as the misleader of Gilbert; and when he overtook the sisters on his melancholy way down the hill, he consulted them how their father would bear it.

‘Oh! I don’t know,’ said Lucy; ‘he’ll be terribly angry. I should not wonder if he sent Gilbert straight off to India; should you, Sophy?’

‘I hope he will do nothing in haste,’ exclaimed Mr. Dusautoy. ‘I do believe if those two lads were but separated, or even out of such company, they would both do very well.’

‘Yes’ exclaimed Lucy; ‘and after all, they are such absurd regulations, treating men like schoolboys, wanting them to keep such regular troublesome hours. Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy told me that there was no enduring the having everything enforced.’

'If things had been enforced on poor Algernon earlier, this might never have been,' sighed his uncle.

'I'm sure I don't see why papa should mind it so much,' continued Lucy. 'Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy told me his friend Lord Reginald Raymond had been rusticated twice, and expelled at last.'

'What do you think of it, Sophy?' asked the Vicar, anxiously.

'I don't feel as if any one of us could ever look up again,' she answered very low.

'Why, no; not that exactly. It is not quite the right way to take these things, Sophy,' said Mr. Dusautoy. 'Boys may be very foolish and wrong-headed, without disgracing their family.'

Sophy did not answer—it was all too fresh and sore; and she did not find much consolation in the number of youths whom Lucy reckoned up as having incurred the like penalty. When they entered the house, and Mr. Dusautoy knocked at the library door, she followed Lucy into the garden, without knowing where she was going, and threw herself down upon the grass, miserable at the pain which was being inflicted upon her father, and with a hardened resentful feeling, between contempt and anger, against the brother, who, for very weakness, could so dishonour and grieve him. She clenched her hand in the intensity of her passionate thoughts and impulses, and sat like a statue, while Lucy, from time to time, between the tying up of flowers and watering of annuals, came up with inconsistent exhortations not to be so unhappy—for it was not expulsion—it was sure to be unjust—nobody would think the worse of them because young men were foolish—all men of spirit did get into scrapes—

It was lucky for Lucy that all this passed by Sophy's ear as unheeded as the babbling of the brook. She did not move till roused by Ulick O'More, coming up from the bridge, telling that he had met some Irish haymakers in the meadows, and saying he wanted to beg a frock for one of their children.

'I think I can find you one,' said Lucy, 'if you will wait a minute; but don't go in, Mr. Dusautoy is there.'

'Is anything the matter?' he exclaimed.

'Every one must soon know,' said Lucy; 'it is of no use to keep it back, Sophy. Only my brother and Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy have got into a scrape about a wine party, and are going to be rusticated. But wait, I'll fetch the frock.'

Sophy had almost run away, while her sister spoke, but the kind look of consternation and pity on Ulick's face deterred her; he in soliloquy repeated, as if confounded by the greatness of the misfortune, 'Poor Gilbert!'

'Poor Gilbert!' burst from Sophy in irritation at misplaced sympathy; 'I thought it would be papa and mamma you cared for?'

'With reason,' returned Ulick; 'but I was thinking how it must break his heart to have pained such as they.'

'I wish he would feel it thus,' exclaimed Sophy; 'but he never will!'

'Oh! banish that notion, Sophy,' cried Ulick, recoiling at the indignation in her dark eyes; 'next to grieving my mother, I declare nothing could crush me like meeting a look such as that from a sister of mine.'

'How can I help it?' she said, reserve breaking down in her vehemence, 'when I think how much papa has suffered—how much Gilbert has to make up to him—how mamma took him for her own—how they have borne with him, and set their happiness on him, and yielded to his fancies, only for him to disappoint them so cruelly, and just because he can't say No! I hope he won't come home; I shall never know how to speak to him!'

'But all that makes it so much the worse for him,' said Ulick, in a tone of amazement.

'Yes, you can't understand,' she answered; 'if he had had one spark of feeling like you, he would rather have died than have gone on as he has done.'

'Surely, many a man may be overtaken in a fault, and never be wrong at heart,' said Ulick. 'There's many a worse sin than what the world sets a blot upon, and I believe that is just why homes were made.'

Lucy came back with the frock, and Ulick, thanking

her, sped away ; while Sophy slowly went up-stairs and laid herself on her couch. For a woman to find a man thinking her over-hard and severe, is sure either to harden or to soften her very decidedly, and it was a hard struggle which would be the effect. There was an inclination at first to attribute his surprise to the lax notions and foolish fondness of his home, where no doubt far worse disorders than Gilbert's were treated as mere matters of course. But such strong pity for the offender did not seem to accord with this ; and the more she thought the more sure she became that it was the fresh charity and sweetness of an innocent spirit, 'believing all things,' and separating the fault from the offender. His words had fallen on her ear in a sense beyond what he meant. Pride and uncharitable resentment might be worse sins than mere weakness and excess. She thought of the elder son in the parable, who, unknowing of his brother's temptation and sorrow, closed his heart against his return ; and if her tears would have come, she would have wept that she could not bring herself to look on Gilbert otherwise than as the troubler of her father's peace.

When her mother at last came up-stairs, she only ventured to ask gently, 'How does papa bear it ?'

'It did not come without preparation,' was the answer ; 'and at first we were occupied with comforting Mr. Dusautoy, who takes to himself all the shame his nephew will not feel, for having drawn poor Gilbert into such a set.'

'And papa ?' still asked Sophy.

'He is very quiet, and it is not easy to tell. I believe it was a great mistake, though not of his making, to send Gilbert to Oxford at all, and I doubt whether he will ever go back again.'

'Oh, mamma, not conquer this, and live it down !' cried Sophy ; but then changing, she sighed and said, 'If he would—'

'Yes, a great deal depends upon how he may take this, and what becomes of Algernon Dusautoy ; though I suppose there is no lack of other tempters. Your papa has even spoken of India again ; he still thinks he would

be more guarded there, but all depends on the spirit in which we find him. One thing I hope, that I shall leave it all to his father's judgment, and not say one word.'

The next post brought a penitent letter from Gilbert, submitting completely to his father; only begging that he might not see any one at home until he should have redeemed his character, and promising to work very hard and deny himself all relaxation if he might only go to a tutor at a distance.

This did not at all accord with Mr. Kendal's views. He had an unavowed distrust of Gilbert's letters; he did not fancy a tutor thus selected, and believed the boy to be physically incapable of the proposed amount of study. So he wrote a very grave but merciful summons to Willow Lawn.

Albinia went to meet the delinquent at Hadminster, and was struck by the different deportment of the two youths. Algernon Dusautoy, whose servant had met him, sauntered up to her as if nothing had happened, carelessly hoped all were well at Bayford, and, in spite of her exceeding coldness, talked on with perfect ease upon the chances of a war with Russia, and had given her three or four maxims, before Gilbert came up with the luggage van, with a bag in his hand, and a hurried bewildered manner, unable to meet her eye. He handed her into the carriage, seated himself beside her, and drove off without one unnecessary word, while Algernon, mounting his horse, waved them a disengaged farewell, and cantered on. Albinia heard a heavy sigh, and saw her companion very wan and sorrowful, dejection in every feature, in the whole stoop of his figure, and in the nervous twitch of his hands. The contrast gave an additional impulse to her love and pity, and the first words she said were, 'Your father is quite ready to forgive.'

'I knew he would be so,' he answered, hardly able to command his voice; 'I knew you would all be a great deal too kind to me, and that is the worst of all.'

'No, Gilbert, not if it give you resolution to resist the next time.'

He groaned; and it was not long before she drew

from him a sincere avowal of his follies and repentance. He had been led on by assurances that 'every one' did the like, by fear of betraying his own timidity, by absurd dread of being disdained as slow ; all this working on his natural indolence and love of excitement, had combined to involve him in habits which had brought on him this disgrace. It was a hopeful sign that he admitted its justice, and accused no one of partiality ; the reprimand had told upon him, and he was too completely struck down even to attempt to justify himself ; exceedingly afraid of his father, and only longing to hide himself. Such was his utter despair, that Albinia had no scruples in encouraging him, and assuring him with all her heart, that if taken rightly, the shock that brought him to his senses, might be the blessing of his life. He did not take comfort readily, though soothed by her kindness ; he could not get over his excessive dread of his father, and each attempt at reassurance fell short. At last it came out that the very core of his misery was this, that he had found himself for part of the journey, in the same train with Miss Durant and two or three children. He could not tell her where he was going nor why, and he had leant back in the carriage, and watched her on the platform by stealth, as she moved about, 'lovelier and more graceful than ever !' but how could he present himself to her in his disgrace and misery ? 'Oh, Mrs. Kendal, I forgive my father, but my life was blighted when I was cut off from her !'

'No, Gilbert, you are wrong. There is no blighting in a worthy, disinterested attachment. To be able to love and respect such a woman is a good substantial quality in you, and ought to make you a higher and better man.'

Gilbert turned round a face of extreme amazement. 'I thought,' he said, 'I thought you—' and went no farther.

'I respect your feeling for her more than when it was two years younger,' she said ; 'I should respect it doubly if, instead of making you ashamed, it had saved you from the need of shame.'

‘Do you give me any hope?’ cried Gilbert, his face gleaming into sudden eager brightness.

‘Things have not become more suitable,’ said Albinia; and his look lapsed again into despondency; but she added, ‘Each step towards real manhood, force of character, and steadiness, would give you weight which might make your choice worth your father’s consideration, and you worth that of *Géneviève*.’

‘Oh! would you but have told me so before!’

‘It was evident to your own senses,’ said Albinia; and she thought of the suggestion that Sophy had made.

‘Too late! too late!’ sighed Gilbert.

‘No, never too late! You have had a warning; you are very young, and it cannot be too late for winning a character, and redeeming the time!’

‘And you tell me I may love her!’ repeated Gilbert, so intoxicated with the words, that she became afraid of them.

‘I do not tell you that you may importune her, or disobey your father. I only tell you that to look up and work, and deny yourself, in honour of one so truly noble, is one of the best and most saving of secondary motives. I shall honour you, Gilbert, if you do so use it as to raise and support you, though of course I cannot promise that she can be earned by it, and even that motive will not do alone, however powerful you may think it.’

Neither of them said more, but Gilbert sighed heavily several times, and would willingly have checked their homeward speed. He grew pale as they entered the town, and groaned as the gates swung back, and they rattled over the wooden bridge. It was about four o’clock, and he said, hurriedly, as with a sort of hope, ‘I suppose they are all out.’

He was answered by a whoop of ecstasy, and before he was well out of the carriage, he was seized by the joyous Maurice, shouting that he had been for a ride with papa, without a leading rein. Happy age for both, too young to know more than that the beloved play-fellow was at home again!

Little Albinia studied her brother till the small mem-

ory came back, and she made her pretty signs for the well-remembered dancing in his arms. From such greetings, Gilbert's wounded spirit could not shrink, much as he dreaded all others; and, carrying the baby and preceded by Maurice, while he again muttered that of course no one was at home, he went up-stairs.

Albinia meantime tapped at the library door. She knew Mr. Kendal to be there, yearning to forgive, but thinking it right to have his pardon sought; and she went in to tell him of his son's keen remorse, and deadly fear. Displeased and mournful, Mr. Kendal sighed. 'He has little to fear from me, would he but believe so! He ought to have come to me, but—'

That 'but' meant repentance for over-sternness in times past.

'Let me send him to you.'

'I will come,' said Mr. Kendal, willing to spare his son the terror of presenting himself.

There was a pretty sight in the morning-room. Gilbert was on the floor with the two children, Maurice intent on showing how nearly little Albinia could run alone, and between ordering and coaxing, drawing her gently on; her beautiful brown eyes opened very seriously to the great undertaking, and her round soft hands, with a mixture of confidence and timidity, trusted within the sturdy ones of her small elder, while Gilbert knelt on one knee, and stretched out a protecting arm, ready to grasp the little one, if the more childish brother should fail her, and his countenance, lighted up with interest and affection, was far more prepossessing than when so lately it had been full of cowering, almost abject apprehension.

Was it a sort of instinctive feeling that the little sister would be his best shelter, that made him gather the child into his arms, and hold her before his deeply blushing face as he rose from the floor? She merrily called out, Papa! Maurice loudly began to recount her exploits, and thus passed the salutation, at the end of which Gilbert found that his father was taking the little one from him, and giving her to her mother, who carried her away, calling Maurice with her.

‘Have you nothing to say to me!’ said Mr. Kendal, after waiting for some moments; but as Gilbert only looked up to him with a piteous, scared, uncertain glance, he added; ‘You need not fear me; I believe you have erred more from weakness than from evil inclinations, and I trust in the sincerity of your repentance.’

These kind words softened Gilbert; he assured his father of his thanks for his kindness, no one could grieve more deeply, or be more anxious to atone in any possible manner for what he had unwittingly done.

‘I believe you, Gilbert,’ said his father; ‘but you well know that the only way of atoning for the past, as well as of avoiding such wretchedness and disgrace for the future, is to show greater firmness.’

‘I know it is,’ said Gilbert, sorrowfully.

‘I cannot look into your heart,’ added Mr. Kendal. ‘I can only hope and believe that your grief for the sin is as deep, or deeper, than that for the public stigma, for which comparatively I care little.’

Gilbert exclaimed that so indeed it was, and this was no more than the truth. Out of sight of temptation, and in that pure atmosphere, the loud revel and coarse witticisms that had led him on, were only loathsome and disgusting, and made him miserable in the recollection.

‘I am ready to submit to anything,’ he added, fervently. ‘As long as you forgive me, I am ready to bear anything.’

‘I forgive you from my heart,’ said Mr. Kendal, warmly. ‘I only wish to consider what may be most expedient for you. I should scarcely like to send you back to Oxford to retrieve your character, unless I were sure that you would be more resolute in resisting temptation. No, do not reply; your actions during this time of penance will be a far more satisfactory answer than any promises. I had thought of again applying to your cousin John, to take you into his bank, though you could not now go on such terms as you might have done when there was no error in the background, and I still sometimes question whether it be not the safer method.’

‘Whatever you please,’ said Gilbert; ‘I deserve it all.’

‘Nay, do not look upon my decision, whatever it may be, as punishment, but only as springing from my desire for your real welfare. I will write to your cousin and ask whether he still has a vacancy, but without absolutely proposing you to him, and we will look on the coming months as a period of probation, during which we may judge what may be the wisest course. I will only ask one other question, Gilbert, and you need not be afraid to answer me fully and freely. Have you any debts at Oxford?’

‘A few,’ stammered Gilbert, with a great effort.

‘Can you tell me to whom, and the amount?’

He tried to recollect as well as he could, while completely frightened and confused by the gravity with which his father was jotting them down in his pocket-book.

‘Well, Gilbert,’ he concluded, ‘you have dealt candidly with me, and you shall never have cause to regret having done so. And now we will only feel that you are at home, and dwell no longer on the cause that has brought you. Come out, and see what we have been doing in the meadow.’

Gilbert seemed more overthrown and broken down by kindness than by reproof. He hardly exerted himself even to play with Maurice, or to amuse his grandmother; and though his sisters treated him as usual, he never once lifted up his eyes to meet Sophy’s glance, and scarcely used his voice.

Nothing could be more disarming than such genuine sorrow; and Sophy, pardoning him with all her heart, and mourning for her past want of charity, watched him, longing to do something for his comfort, and to evince her tenderness; but only succeeded in encumbering every petty service or word of intercourse with a weight of sad consciousness.

CHAPTER XXI.

'I HAD almost written to ask your pardon,' said Mrs. Dusautoy, as Albinia entered her drawing-room on the afternoon following. 'I should like by way of experiment to know what *would* put that boy out of countenance. He listened with placid graciousness to his uncle's lecture, and then gave us to understand that he was obliged for his solicitude, and that there was a great deal of jealousy and misrepresentation at Oxford; but he thought it best always to submit to authorities, however unreasonable. And this morning, after amiably paying his respects to me, he said he was going to inquire for Gilbert. I intimated that Willow Lawn was the last place where he would be welcome, but he was far above attending to me. Did Gilbert see him?'

'Gilbert was in the garden with us when we were told he was in the house. Poor fellow, he shuddered, and looked as if he wanted me to guard him, so I sent him out walking with Maurice while I went in, and found Lucy entertaining the gentleman. I made myself as cold and inhospitable as I could, but I am afraid he rather relishes a dignified *retenue*.'

'Poor boy! I wonder what on earth is to be done with him. I never before knew what John's love and patience were.'

'Do you think he will remain here?'

'I cannot tell; we talk of tutors, but John is really, I believe, happier for having him here, and besides one can be sure the worst he is doing is painting a lobster. However, much would depend on what you and Mr. Kendal thought. If he and Gilbert were doing harm to each other, everything must give way.'

'If people of that age will not keep themselves out of harm's way, nobody can do it for them,' said Albinia, 'and as long as Gilbert continues in his present mood, there is more real separation in voluntarily holding aloof, than if they were sent far apart, only to come together again at college.'

Gilbert did continue in the same mood. The tender cherishing of his home restored his spirits; but he was much subdued, and deeply grateful, as he manifested by the most eager and affectionate courtesy, such as made him almost the servant of everybody, without any personal aim or object, except to work up his deficient studies, and to avoid young Dusautoy. He seemed to cling to his family as his protectors, and to follow the occupations least likely to lead to a meeting with the Polysyllable; he was often at church in the week, rode with his father, went parish visiting with the ladies, and was responsible when Maurice fished for minnows in the meadows. Nothing could be more sincerely desirous to atone for the past and enter on a different course, and no conduct could be more truly humble or endearing.

The imaginary disdain of Ulick O'More was entirely gone, and perceiving that the Irishman's delicacy was keeping him away from Willow Lawn, Gilbert himself met him and brought him home, in the delight of having heard of a naval cadetship having been offered to his brother, and full of such eager joy as longed for sympathy.

'Happy fellow!' Gilbert murmured to himself.

Younger in years, more childish in character, poor Gilbert had managed to make his spirit world-worn and weary, compared with the fresh manly heart of the Irishman, all centered in the kindred 'points of Heaven and home,' and enjoying keenly, for the very reason that he bent dutifully with all his might to a humble and uncongenial task.

Yet somehow, admire and esteem as he would, there arose no intimacy or friendship between Gilbert and Ulick; their manners were frank and easy, but there was no spontaneous approach, no real congeniality, nor exchange of mind and sympathy as between Ulick and Mr. Kendal. Albinia had a theory that the friendship was too much watched to *take*; Sophy hated herself for the recurring conviction that 'Gilbert was not the kind of stuff,' though she felt day by day how far he excelled her in humility, gentleness, and sweet temper.

When the Goldsmiths gave their annual dinner-party, Albinia felt a sudden glow at the unexpected sight of Ulick O'More.

'I am only deputy for the Orange man,' he said; 'it is Hyder Ali who ought to be dining here! Yes, it is his doing, I'd back him against any detective!'

'What heroism have you been acting together?'

'We had just given Farmer Martin 120*l.* in notes, when as he went out, we heard little Hyder growling and giving tongue, and a fellow swearing as if he was at the fair of Monyveagh, and the farmer hallooing thieves. I found little Hyder had nailed the rascal fast by the leg, just as he had the notes out of the farmer's pouch. I collared him, Johns ran for the police, and the rascal is fast.'

'What a shame to cheat Mr. Kendal of the committal.'

'The policeman said he was gone out, so we had the villain up to the Admiral with the greater satisfaction, as he was a lodger in one of the Admiral's pet public-houses in Tibbs's Alley.'

'Ah, when Gilbert is of age,' said Albinia, 'woe to Tibbs's! So you are a testimonial to the Tripod?'

'So I suspect, for I found an invitation when I came home, I would have run down to tell you, but I had been kept late, and one takes some getting up for polite society.'

There was a great deal of talk about Hyder's exploit, and some disposition to make Mr. O'More the hero of the day; but this was quickly nipped by his uncle's dry shortness and the superciliousness with which Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy turned the conversation to the provision of pistols, couriers, and guards, for travelling through the Abruzzi. The polysyllabic courage, and false alarms on such a scale, completely eclipsed a real pickpocket, caught by a gipsy's cur and a banker's clerk.

Not that Ulick perceived any disregard until later in the evening, when the young Kendals arrived, and of course he wanted each and all to hear of his Tripod's achievement. He met with ready attention from Sophy and Gilbert, who pronounced that as the cat was to Whit-

tington, so was Hyder to O'More; but when in his overflowing he proceeded to Lucy, she had neither eyes nor ears for him, and when the Vicar told her Mr. O'More was speaking to her, she turned with an air of petulance, so that he felt obliged to beg her pardon and retreat.

The Bayford parties never lasted later than a few minutes after ten, but when once Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy and Miss Kendal had possession of the piano and guitar, there was no conclusion. Song succeeded song, they wanted nothing save their own harmony, and hardly waited for Miss Goldsmith's sleepy thanks. The Vicar hated late hours, and the Kendals felt every song a trespass upon their hosts; but the musicians had their backs to the world, and gave no interval, so that it was eleven o'clock before Mr. Kendal, in desperation, laid his hand on his daughter, and barbarously carried her off.

The flirtation was so palpable, that Albinia mused on the means of repressing it; but she believed that to remonstrate, would only be to give Lucy pleasure, and held her peace till a passion for riding seized upon the young lady. The old pony had had hard service between Sophy's needs and Maurice's exactions, but Lucy's soul soared far above ponies, and fastened upon Gilbert's steed.

'And pray what is Gilbert to ride?'

'Oh! papa does not always want Captain, or Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy would lend him Bamfylde.'

'Thank you,' returned Gilbert, satirically.

Next morning Lucy, radiant with smiles, announced that all was settled. Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy's Lady Elmira would be brought down for her to try this afternoon, so Gilbert might keep his own horse and come too, which permission he received with a long whistle and glance at Mrs. Kendal, and then walked out of the room.

'How disobliging!' said Lucy. 'Well, then, Sophy, you must make your old hat look as well as you can, for I suppose it will not *quite* do to go without any one.'

'Sophy, like her brother, looked at Mrs. Kendal, and with an eye of indignant appeal and entreaty, while Albinia's countenance was so full of displeasure, that Lucy

continued earnestly, 'O, mamma, you can't object. You used to go out riding with papa when he was at Colonel Bury's.'

'Well, Lucy!' exclaimed her sister, 'I did not think even you capable of such a comparison.'

'It's all the same,' said Lucy, tartly, blushing a good deal.

Sophy leapt up to look at her, and Albinia, trying to be calm and judicious, demanded, 'What is the same as what?'

'Why, Algernon and *me*,' was the equally precise reply.

In stately horror, Sophy rose and seriously marched away, leaving, by her look and manner, a species of awe upon both parties, and some seconds passed ere, with crimson blushes, Albinia ventured to invite the dreaded admission, by demanding, 'Now, Lucy, will you be so good as to tell me the meaning of this extraordinary allusion?'

'Why, to be sure—I know it was very different. Papa was so old, and *there were us*,' faltered Lucy; 'but I meant, you would know how it all is—how those things—'

'Stop, Lucy, am I to understand by those things, that you wish me to believe you and Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy are on the same terms as—No, I can't say it.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Lucy, growing frightened, 'I never thought there could be such an uproar about my just going out riding.'

'You have led me to infer so much more, that it becomes my duty to have an explanation, at least,' she added, thinking this sounded cold, 'I should have hoped you would have given me your confidence.'

'O, but you always would make game of him!' cried Lucy.

'Not now; this is much too serious, if you have been led to believe that his attentions are not as I supposed, because you are the only girl about here whom he thinks worthy of his notice.'

'It's a great deal more,' said Lucy, with more feeling and less vanity than had yet been apparent.

'And what has he been making you think, my poor child?' said Albinia. 'I know it is very distressing, but it would be more right and safe if I knew what it amounts to.'

'Not much after all,' said Lucy, her tone implying the reverse, and though her cheeks were crimson, not averse to the triumph of the avowal, nor enduring as much embarrassment as her auditor; 'only he made me sure of it—he said—(now, mamma, you have made me, so I must) that he had changed his opinion of English beauty—you know, mamma. And another time he said he had wandered Europe over to—to find loveliness on the banks of the Baye. Wasn't it absurd? And he says he does not think it half so much that a woman should be accomplished herself, as that she should be able to appreciate other people's talents—and once he said the Principessa Bianca di Moretti would be very much disappointed.'

'Well, my dear,' said Albinia, kindly putting her arm round Lucy's waist, 'perhaps by themselves the things did not so much require to be told. I can hardly blame you, and I wish I had been more on my guard, and helped you more. Only if he seems to care so little about disappointing this lady might he not do the same by you?'

'But she's an Italian, and a Roman Catholic,' exclaimed Lucy.

Albinia could not help smiling, and Lucy, perceiving that this was hardly a valid excuse for her utter indifference towards her Grandison's Clementina, continued, 'I mean—of course there was nothing it.'

'Very possibly; but how would it be, if by-and-by he told somebody that Miss Kendal would be very much disappointed?'

'O, mamma,' cried Lucy, hastily detaching herself, 'you don't know!'

'I cannot tell, my poor Lucy,' said Albinia. 'I fear there must be grief and trouble any way, if you let yourself attend to him, for you know, even if he were in

earnest, it would not be right to think of a person who has shown so little wish to be good.'

Lucy stood for a few moments before the sense reached her mind, then she dropped into a chair, and exclaimed,

'I see how it is! You'll treat him as grandpapa treated Captain Pringle; but I shall break my heart, quite!' and she burst into tears.

'My dear, your father and I will do our best for your happiness, and we would never use concealment. Whatever we do shall be as Christian people working together, not as tyrants with a silly girl.'

Lucy was pleased, and let Albinia take her hand.

'Then I will write to decline the horse. It would be far too marked.'

'But oh, mamma! you won't keep him away!'

'I shall not alter our habits unless I see cause. He is much too young for us to think seriously of what he may have said; and I entreat you to put it out of your mind, for it would be very sad for you to fix your thoughts on him, and then find him not in earnest, and even if he were, you know it would be wrong to let affection grow up where there is no real dependence upon a person's goodness.'

The kindness soothed Lucy, and though she shed some tears, she did not resist the decision. Indeed she was sensible of that calm determination of manner, which all the family had learnt to mean that the measures thus taken were unalterable, whereas the impetuous impulses often were reversed.

Many a woman's will is like the tide, ever fretting at the verge of the boundary, but afraid to overpass it, and only tempting the utmost limit in the certainty of the recoil, and Lucy perhaps felt a kind of protection in the curb, even while she treated it as an injury. She liked to be the object of solicitude, and was pleased with Albinia's extra kindness, while, perhaps, there was some excitement in the belief that Algernon was missing her, so she was particularly amenable, and not much out of spirits.

The original Meadows character, and Bayford breed-

ing, had for a time been surmounted by Albinia's influence and training; but so ingrain was the old disposition, that a touch would at once re-awaken it, and the poor girl was in a neutral state, coloured by whichever impression had been most recent. Albinia's hopes of prevailing in the end increased when Mrs. Dusautoy told her, with a look of intelligence, that Algernon was going to stay with a connexion of his mother, a Mr. Greenaway, with six daughters, very stylish young ladies.

Six stylish young ladies! Albinia could have embraced them all, and actually conferred a cordial nod on Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy when she met him on the way home.

But as she entered the house, so ominous a tone summoned her to the library, that she needed not to be told that Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy had been there.

'I told him,' said Mr. Kendal, 'that he was too young for me to entertain his proposal, and I intimated that he had a character to redeem before presenting himself in such a capacity.'

'I hope you made the refusal evident to his intellect.'

'He drove me to be more explicit than I intended. I think he was astonished. He stared at me for full three minutes before he could believe in the refusal. Poor lad, it must be real attachment, there could be no other inducement.'

'And Lucy is exceedingly pretty.'

Mr. Kendal glanced at the portrait over the mantelpiece, smiled sadly, and shook his head.

'Poor dear,' continued Albinia; 'what a commotion there will be in her head; but she has behaved so well hitherto, that I hope we may steer her safely through, above all, if one of the six cousins will but catch him in the rebound! Have you spoken to her?'

'Is it necessary?'

'So asked her grandfather,' said Albinia, smiling, as he, a little out of countenance, muttered something of 'foolish affair—mere child—and turn her head—'

'That's done!' said Albinia, 'we have only to try to get it straight. Besides it would hardly be just to let her

think he had meant nothing, and I have promised to deal openly with her, otherwise we can hardly hope for plain dealing from her.'

'And you think it will be a serious disappointment?'

'She is highly flattered by his attention, but I don't know how deep it may have gone.'

'I wish people would let one's daughters alone!' exclaimed Mr. Kendal. 'You will talk to her then, Albinia, and don't let her think me more harsh than you can help, and come and tell me how she bears it.'

'Won't you speak to her yourself?'

'Do you think I must?' he said, reluctantly; 'you know so much better how to manage her.'

'I think you must do this, dear Edmund,' she said, between decision and entreaty. 'She knows that I dislike the man, and may fancy it my doing if she only hears it at second-hand. If you speak, there will be no appeal, and besides there are moments when the really nearest should have no go-betweens.'

'We were not very near without you,' he said. 'If it were Sophy, I should know better what to be about.'

'Sophy would not put you in such a fix.'

'No. I have fancied—' he paused, smiling, while she waited in eager curiosity, such as made him finish as if ashamed. 'I have thought our likings much the same. Have you never observed what I mean?'

'Oh! I never observe anything. I did not find out Maurice and Winifred till he told me. Who do you think it is? I always thought love would be the making of Sophy. I see she is another being. What is your guess, Mr. Hope?'

Mr. Kendal made a face of astonishment at such an improbable guess, and was driven into exclaiming, 'How could any one help thinking of O'More?'

'Oh! only too delightful!' cried Albinia. 'Why didn't I think of it—but then his way is so free and cousinly with us all.'

'There may be nothing in it,' said Mr. Kendal; 'and under present circumstances it would hardly be desirable.'

'If old Mr. Goldsmith acts as he ought,' continued Al-

binia, 'we should never lose our Sophy—and what a son we should have! he has so exactly the bright temper that she needs.'

'Well, well, that is all in the clouds,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I wish the present were equally satisfactory.'

'Ah, I had better call poor Lucy.'

'Come back with her, pray,' called Mr. Kendal, nervously.

Albinia regretted her superfluous gossip when Lucy appeared with eyes so sparkling, and cheeks so flushed, that it was plain that she had been in all the miseries of suspense. Her countenance glowed with feeling, that lifted her beyond her ordinary doll-like prettiness. Albinia's heart sank with compassion as she held her hand, and her father stood as if struck by something more like the vision of his youth than he had been prepared for; each feeling that something genuine was present, and respecting it accordingly.

'Lucy,' said Mr. Kendal, tenderly, 'I see I need not tell you why I have sent for you. You are very young, my dear, and you must trust us to care for your happiness.'

'Yes.' Lucy looked up wistfully.

'This gentleman has some qualities such as may make him shine in the eyes of a young lady; but it is our duty to look farther, and I am afraid I know nothing of him that could justify me in trusting him with anything so precious to me.'

Lucy's face became full of consternation, her hand lay unnerved in Albinia's pressure, and Mr. Kendal turned his eyes from her to his wife as he proceeded,

'I have seen so much wretchedness caused by want of religious principle, that even where the morals appeared unblemished, I should feel no confidence where I saw no evidence of religion; and I should consider it as positively wrong to sanction an engagement with such a person. Now you must perceive that we have every means of forming an opinion of this young man, and that he has given us no reason to think he would show the unselfish care for your welfare that we should wish to secure.'

Albinia tried to make it comprehensible. 'You know, my dear, we have always seen him resolved on his own way, and not caring how he may inconvenience his uncle and aunt. We know his temper is not always amiable, and differently as you see him, you must let us judge.'

Wrenching her hand away, Lucy burst into tears. Her father looked at Albinia, as if she ought to have saved him this infliction, and she began a little whispering about not distressing papa, which checked the sobs, and enabled him to say, 'There, that's right, my dear, I see you are willing to submit patiently to our judgment, and I believe you will find it for the best. We will do all in our power to help you, and make you happy,' and bending down he kissed her, and left her to his wife.

In such family scenes, logic is less useful than the power of coming to a friendly conclusion; Lucy's awe of her father was a great assistance, she was touched with his unwonted softness, and did not apprehend how total was the rejection. But what he was spared, was reserved for Albinia. There was a lamentable scene of sobbing and weeping, beyond all argument, and only ending in physical exhaustion, which laid her on the bed all the rest of the day.

Gilbert and Sophy could not but be aware of the cause of her distress. The former thought it a great waste.

'Tell Lucy,' he said, 'that if she wishes to be miserable for life, she has found the best way! He is a thorough-bred tyrant at heart, pig-headed, and obstinate, and with the very worst temper I ever came across. Not a soul can he feel for, nor admire but himself. His wife will be a perfect slave. I declare I would as soon sell her to Legree.'

Sophy's views of the gentleman were not more favourable, but she was in terror lest Lucy should have a permanently broken heart, after the precedent of Aunt Maria. And on poor Sophy fell the misfortune of being driven up by grandmamma's inquiries, to own that the proposal had been rejected.

Shade of poor dear Mr. Meadows, didst thou not stand aghast? Five thousand a year refused! Grandmamma would have had a fit if she had not conceived a conviction, that imparted a look of shrewdness to her mild simple old face. Of course Mr. Kendal was only holding off till the young man was a little older. He could have no intention of letting his daughter miss such a match, and dear Lucy would have her carriage, and be presented at court.

Sophy argued vehemently against this, and poor grandmamma, who had with difficulty been taught worldly wisdom as a duty, and always thought herself good when she talked prudently, began to cry. Sophy, quite overcome, was equally distressing with her apologies; Albinia found them both in tears, and Sophy was placed on the sick-list by one of her peculiar headaches of self-reproach.

It was a time of great perplexity. Lucy cried incessantly, bursting out at every trifle, but making no complaints, and submitting so meekly, that the others were almost as unhappy as herself.

She was first cheered by the long-promised visit from Mrs. Annesley and Miss Ferrars. Albinia had now no fears of showing off home or children, and it was a great success.

The little Awk was in high beauty, and graciously winning, and Maurice's likeness to his Uncle William enchanted the aunts, though they were shocked at his mamma's indifference to his constant imperilling of life and limb, and grievously discomfited his sisters by adducing children who talked French and read history, whereas he could not read d-o-g without spelling, and had peculiar views as to b and d, p and q. However, if he could not read he could ride, and Mrs. Annesley scarcely knew the extent of the favour she conferred, when she commissioned Gilbert to procure for him a pony as his private property.

Miss Ferrars had not expected one of the thirty-six O'Mores to turn up here. She gave some good advice about hasty intimacies, and as it was received with a de-

fence of the gentility of the O'Mores, the two good ladies agreed that dear Albinia was quite a child still, not fit for the care of those girls, and it would be only acting kindly to take Lucy to Brighton, and show her something of the world, or Albinia would surely let her fall a prey to that Irish clerk.

They liked Lucy's pretty face and obliging ways, and were fond of having a young lady in their house; they saw her looking ill and depressed, and thought sea air would be good for her, and though Lucy fancied herself past caring for gaiety, and was very sorry to leave home and mamma, she was not insensible to the refreshment of her wardrobe, and the excitement and honour of the invitation. At night she cried lamentably, and clung round Albinia's neck, sobbing, 'Oh, mamma, what will become of me without you?' but in the morning she went off in very fair spirits, and Albinia augured hopefully that soon her type of perfection would be no longer Polysyllabic. Her first letters were deplorable, but they soon became cheerful, as her mornings were occupied by lessons in music and drawing; and her evenings in quiet parties among the friends whom the aunts met at Brighton. Aunt Gertrude wrote to announce that her charge had recovered her looks and was much admired, and this was corroborated by the prosperous complacency of Lucy's style. Albinia was more relieved than surprised when the letters dwindled in length and number, well knowing that the Family Office was not favourable to leisure; and devoid of the epistolary gift herself, she always wondered more at people's writing than at their silence, and scarcely reciprocated Lucy's effusions by the hurried notes which she enclosed in the well-filled envelopes of Gilbert and Sophy, who, like their father, could cover any amount of sheets of paper.

CHAPTER XXII.

'THERE!' cried Ulick O'More, 'I may wish you all good-bye. There's an end of it.'

Mr. Kendal stood aghast.

'He's insulted my father and my family,' cried Ulick, 'and does he think I'll write another cipher for him!'

'Your uncle?'

'Don't call him my uncle. I wish I'd never set eyes on his wooden old face, to put the family name and honour in the power of such as he.'

'What has he done to you?'

'He has offered to take me as his partner,' cried Ulick, with flashing eyes; and as an outcry arose, not in sympathy with his resentment, he continued vehemently, 'Stay, you have not heard! 'Twas on condition I'd alter my name, leave out the O that has come down to me from them that were kings and princes before his grandfathers broke stones on the road.'

'He offered to take you into partnership,' repeated Mr. Kendal.

'Do you think I could listen to such terms?' cried the indignant lad. 'Give up the O! Why, I would never be able to face my brothers!'

'But, Ulick—'

'Don't talk to me, Mr. Kendal; I wouldn't sell my name if you were to argue to me like Plato, nor if his bank were the Bank of England. I might as well be an Englishman at once.'

'Then this was the insult?'

'And enough too, but it wasn't all. When I answered, speaking as coolly, I assure you, as I'm doing this minute, what does he do, but call it a folly, and taunt us for a crew of Irish beggars! Beggars we may be, but we'll not be bought by him.'

'Well, this must have been an unexpected reception of such a proposal.'

'You may say that! The English think everything may be bought with money! I'd have overlooked his

ignorance, poor old gentleman, if he would not have gone and spoken of my O as vulgar. Vulgar! So when I began to tell him how it began from Tigearnach, the O'More of Ballymakilty, that was Tanist of Connaught, in the time of King Mac Murrrough, and that killed Phadrig the O'Donoghue in single combat at the fight of Shoch-knockmorty and bit off his nose, calling it a sweet morsel of revenge, what does he do but tell me I was mad, and that he would have none of my nonsensical tales of the savage Irish. So I said I couldn't stand to hear my family insulted, and then—would you believe it? he would have it that it was I that was insolent, and when I was not going to apologize for what I had borne from him, he said he had always known how it would be trying to deal with one of our family, no better than making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. "And I'm obliged for the compliment," said I, quite coolly and politely, "but no Irish pig would sell his ear for a purse;" and so I came away, quite civilly and reasonably. Aye, I see what you would do, Mr. Kendal, but I beg with all my heart you won't. There are some things a gentleman should not put up with and I'll not take it well of you if you call it my duty to hear my father and his family abused. I'll despise myself if I could. *You don't—* cried he, turning round to Albinia.

'Oh, no; but I think you should try to understand Mr. Goldsmith's point of view.'

'I understand it only too well, if that would do any good. Point of view—why, 'tis the farmyard cock's point of view, strutting on the top of that *bank* of his own, and patronizing the free pheasant out in the woods. More fool I for ever letting him clip my wings; but he's seen the last of me. No, don't ask me to make it up. It can't be done—'

'What can be done to the boy?' asked Albinia; 'how can he be brought to hear reason?'

'Leave him alone,' Mr. Kendal said aside; while Ulick in a torrent of eager cadences protested his perfect sanity and reason, and Mr. Kendal quietly left the room, again to start on a peace-making mission, but it was un-

promising, for Mr. Goldsmith began by declaring he would not hear a single word in favour of the ungrateful young dog.

Mr. Kendal gathered that young O'More had become so valuable, and that, cold and indifferent as Mr. Goldsmith appeared, he had been growing so fond and so proud of his nephew, as actually to resolve on giving him a share of the business, and dividing the inheritance which had hitherto been destined to a certain Andrew Goldsmith, brought up in a relation's office at Bristol. Surprised at his own graciousness, and anticipating transports of gratitude, his dismay and indignation at the reception of his proposal were extreme, especially as he had no conception of the offence he had given regarding the unfortunate O as a badge of Hibernianism and vulgarity. 'I put it to you, Mr. Kendal, as a sensible man, whether it would not be enough to destroy the credit of the bank to connect it with such a name as that, looking like an Irish haymaker's. I should be ashamed of every note I issued.'

'It is unlucky,' said Mr. Kendal, 'and a difficulty the lad could hardly appreciate, since it is a good old name, and the O is a special mark of nobility.'

'And what has a banker to do with nobility? Pretty sort of nobility too, at that dog-kennel of theirs in Ireland, and his father, a mere adventurer, if ever there lived one! But I swore when he carried off poor Ellen that his speculation should do him no good, and I've kept my word. I wish I hadn't been fool enough to meddle with one of the concern! No, no, 'tis no use arguing, Mr. Kendal, I have done with him! I would not make him a partner, not if he offered to change his name to John Smith! I never thought to meet with such ingratitude, but it runs in the breed! I might have known better than to make much of one of the crew. Yet it is a pity too, we have not had such a clear-headed, trustworthy fellow about the place since young Bowles died; he has a good deal of the Goldsmith in him when you set him to work, and makes his figures just like my poor father. I thought it was his writing the other day till I looked at

the date. Clever lad, very, but it runs in the blood. I shall send for Andrew Goldsmith.'

One secret of Mr. Kendal's power was that he never interrupted, but let people run themselves down and contradict themselves; and all he observed was, 'However it may end, you have done a great deal for him. Even if you parted now, he would be able to find a situation.'

'Why—yes,' said Mr. Goldsmith, 'the lad knew nothing serviceable when he came, we had an infinity of maggots about algebra and logarithms to drive out of his head; but now he really is nearly as good an accountant as old Johns.'

'You would be sorry to part with him, and I cannot help hoping this may be made up.'

'You don't bring me any message! I've said I'll listen to nothing.'

'No; the poor boy's feelings are far too much wounded,' said Mr. Kendal. 'Whether rightly or wrongly, he fancies that his father and family have been slightly spoken of, and he is exceedingly hurt.'

'His father! I'm sure I did not say a tenth part of what the fellow richly deserves. If the young gentleman is so touchy, he had better go back to Ireland again.'

Nothing more favourable could Mr. Kendal obtain, though he thought Mr. Goldsmith uneasy, and perhaps impressed by the independence of his nephew's attitude.

It was an arduous office for a peacemaker, where neither party could comprehend the feelings of the other, but on his return he found that Ulick had stormed himself into comparative tranquillity, and was listening the better to the womankind, because they had paid due honour to the amiable ancestral Tigearnach and all his guttural posterity, whose savage exploits and bloody catastrophes acted as such a sedative, that by the time he had come down to Uncle Bryan of the Kaffir war, he actually owned that as to the mighty 'O,' Mr. Goldsmith might have erred in sheer ignorance.

'After all,' said Albinia, 'U. O'More is rather personal in writing to a creditor.'

'It might be worse,' said Ulick, laughing, 'if my name

was John. I. O'More would be a dangerous confession. But I'll not be come round even by your fun, Mrs. Kendal; I'll not part with my father's name.'

'No, that would be base,' said Sophy.

'Who would wish to persuade you?' added Albinia. 'I am sure you are right in refusing with your feelings; I only want you to forgive your uncle, and not to break with him.'

'I'd forgive him his ignorance, but my mother herself could not wish me to forgive what he said of my father.'

'And how if he thinks this explosion needs forgiveness?'

'He must do without it,' said Ulick. 'No, I was cool, I assure you, cool and collected, but it was not fit for me to stand by and hear my father insulted.'

Albinia closed the difficult discussion by observing that it was time to dress, and Sophy followed her from the room burning with indignant sympathy. 'It would be meanly subservient to ask pardon for defending a father whom he thought maligned,' said Albinia, and Sophy took exception at the word 'thought.'

'Ah! of course *he* cannot be deceived!' said Albinia—but no sooner were the words spoken than she was half-startled, half-charmed by finding they had evoked a glow of colour.

'How do you think it will end?' asked Sophy.

'I can hardly fancy he will not be forgiven, and yet—it might be better.'

'Yes, I do think he would get on faster in India,' said Sophy, eagerly; 'he could do just as Gilbert might have done.'

Was it possible for Albinia to have kept out of her eyes a significant glance, or to have disarmed her lips of a merry smile of amused encouragement? How she had looked she knew not, but the red deepened on Sophy's whole face, and after one inquiring gaze from the eyes they were cast down, and an ineffable brightness came over the expression, softening and embellishing. 'What have I done?' thought Albinia. 'Never mind—it must

have been all there, or it would not have been wakened so easily—if he goes they will have a scene first.’

But when Mr. Kendal came back he only advised Ulick to go to his desk as usual the next day, as if nothing had happened.

And Ulick owned, that, turn out as things might, he could not quit his work in the first ardour of his resentment, and with a great exertion of Christian forgiveness, he finally promised not to give notice of his retirement unless his uncle should repeat the offence. This time Albinia durst not look at Sophy.

Rather according to his friend’s hopes than his own, he was able to report at the close of the next day, that he had not ‘had a word from his uncle, except a nod ;’ and thus the days passed on, Andrew Goldsmith did not appear, and it became evident that he was to remain on sufferance as a clerk. Nor did Albinia and Sophy venture to renew the subject between themselves. At first there was consciousness in their silence ; soon their minds were otherwise engrossed.

Mrs. Meadows was suddenly stricken with paralysis, and was thought to be dying. She recovered partial consciousness in the course of the next day, but was constantly moaning the name of her eldest and favourite granddaughter ; and when telegraph and express train brought home the startled and trembling Lucy, she was led at once to the sick bed—where at her name there was the first gleam of anything like pleasure.

‘And where have you been, my dear, this long time ?’

‘I’ve been at—at Brighton, dear grandmamma,’ said Lucy, so much agitated as scarcely to be able to recall the name, or utter the words.

‘And—I say, my dear love,’ said Mrs. Meadows, earnestly and mysteriously, ‘have you seen *him* ?’

Poor Lucy turned scarlet with distress and confusion, but she was held fast, and grandmamma pursued, ‘I’m sure he has not his equal for handsomeness and stateliness, and there must have been a pair of you.’

‘Dear grandmamma, we must let Lucy go and take off her things ; she shall come back presently, but she has

had a long journey,' interposed Albinia, seeing her ready to sink into the earth.

But Mrs. Meadows had roused into eagerness, and would not let her go. 'I hope you danced with him, dear,' she went on; 'and it's all nonsense about his being high and silent. Your papa is bent on it, and you'll live like a princess in India.'

'She takes you for your mother—she means papa,' whispered Albinia, not without a secret flash at once of indignation at perceiving how his first love had been wasted, yet of exultation in finding that no one but herself had known how to love him; but poor Lucy, completely and helplessly overcome, could only exclaim in a faltering voice: 'Oh, grandmamma, don't—' and Albinia was forced to disengage her, support her out of the room, and leaving her to her sister, hasten back to soothe the old lady, who had been terrified by her emotion. It had been a great mistake to bring her in abruptly, when tired with her journey, and not fully aware what awaited her. But there was at that time reason to think all would soon be over, and Albinia was startled and confused.

Albinia had hitherto been the only efficient nurse of the family. Sophy's presence seemed to stir up instincts of the old wrangling habits, and the invalid was always fretful when left to her, so that to her own exceeding distress she was kept almost entirely out of the sick room.

Lucy, on the other hand, was extremely valuable there, her bright manner and unfailing chatter always amused if needful, and her light step and tender hand made her useful, and highly appreciated by the regular nurse.

For the first few days, they watched in awe for the last dread summons, but gradually it was impossible not to become in a manner habituated to the suspense, so that common things resumed their interest, and though Sophy was pained by the incongruity, it could not have been otherwise without the spirits and health giving way under the strain. Nothing could be more trying than to have the mind wrought up to hourly anticipation of the last parting, and then the delay, without the reaction of re-

covery, the spirit beyond all reach of intercourse, and the mortal frame languishing and drooping. Mr. Kendal had from the first contemplated the possibility of the long duration of such lingering, and did his utmost to promote such enlivenment and change for the attendants as was consistent with their care of the sufferer. They never dared to be all beyond call at once, since a very little agitation might easily suffice to bring on a fatal attack, and Albinia and Lucy were forced to share the hours of exercise and employment between them, and often Albinia could not leave the house and garden at all.

Gilbert was an excellent auxiliary, and would devote many an hour to the cheering of the poor shattered mind. His entrance seldom failed to break the thread of melancholy murmur, and he had exactly the gentle, bright, attentive manner best fitted to rouse and enliven. Nothing could be more irreproachable than his conduct, and his consideration and gentleness so much endeared him, that he had never been so much at peace. All he dreaded was the leaving what was truly to him the sanctuary of home; he feared alike temptation and the effort of resistance, and could not bear to go away when his grandmother was in so precarious a state, and he could so much lighten Mrs. Kendal's cares both by being with her, and by watching over Maurice. His parents were almost equally afraid of trusting him in the world; and the embodiment of the militia for the county offered a quasi profession, which would keep him at home, and yet give him employment. He was very anxious to be allowed to apply for a commission, and pleaded so earnestly and humbly that it would be his best hope of avoiding his former errors, that Mr. Kendal yielded, though with doubt whether it would be well to confine him to so narrow a sphere. Meantime the corps was quartered at Bayford, and filled the streets with awkward louts in red jackets, who were inveterate in mistaking the right for the left. Gilbert had a certain shy pride in his soldiership, and Maurice stepped like a young Field Marshal when he saw his brother saluted.

Nothing had so much decided this step as the finding

that young Dusautoy was to return to his college after Easter. He was at the Vicarage again, marking his haughty avoidance of the Kendal family; and to their great joy, Lucy did not appear distressed, she was completely absorbed in her grandmother, and shrank from all allusion to her lover. Had the small flutter of vanity been cured by a glimpse beyond her own corner of the world?

But soon Albinia became sensible of an alteration in Gilbert. He had no sooner settled completely into his new employment, than a certain restless dissatisfaction seemed to have possessed him. He was fastidious at his meals, grumbled at his horse, scolded the groom, had fits of petulance towards his brother, and almost neglected Mrs. Meadows. No one could wonder at a youth growing weary of such attendance, but his tenderness and amiability had been his best points, and it was grievous to find them failing. Albinia would have charged the alteration on his brother officers, if they had not been a very steady and humdrum set, whose society Gilbert certainly did not prefer. She was more uneasy at finding that he sometimes saw Algernon Dusautoy, though for Lucy's sake, he always avoided bringing his name forward.

A woman was ill in the bargeman's cottage by the towing-path, and Albinia had walked to see her. As she came down-stairs, she heard voices, and beheld Mr. Hope evidently on the same errand with herself, talking to Gilbert. She caught the words ere she could safely descend the rickety staircase. Gilbert was saying,

'Oh! some happy pair from the High Street!'

'I beg your pardon,' said Mr. Hope; 'I am so blind, I really took it for your sister, but our shopkeepers' daughters do dress so!'

Albinia looking in the same direction, beheld in a walk that skirted the meadow towards the wood, two figures, of which only one was clearly visible; it was nearly a quarter of a mile off, but there was something about it that made her exclaim, 'Why, that's Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy! whom can he be walking with?'

Gilbert started violently at hearing her behind him, and a word or two of greeting passed with Mr. Hope; then there was some spying at the pair, but they were getting further off, and disappeared in the wood, while Gilbert, screwing up his eyes, and stammering, declared he did not know; it might be, he did not think any one could be recognised at such a distance; and then saying that he had fallen in with Mr. Hope by chance, he hastened on. The curate made a brief visit, and walked home with her, examining her on her impression that the gentleman was young Dusautoy, and finally consulting her on the expediency of mentioning the suspicion to the Vicar, in case he should be deluding some foolish tradesman's daughter. Albinia strongly advised his doing so; she had much faith in her own keen eyesight, and could not mistake the majestic mien of Algernon; she thought the Vicar ought at once to be warned, but felt relieved that it was not her part to speak.

She was very glad when Mr. Hope took an opportunity of telling her that young Dusautoy was going to the Greenaways in a day or two.

As to Gilbert, it was as if this departure had relieved him from an incubus; he was in better spirits from that moment, and returned to his habits of kindness to both grandmamma and Maurice.

The manifold duties of head sick-nurse, governess, and housekeeper, were apt to clash, and valiant and unwearied as Albinia was, she was obliged perforce to leave the children more to others than she would have preferred. Little Albinia was all docility and sweetness, and already did such wonders with her ivory letters, that the exulting Sophy tried to abash Maurice by auguring that she would be the first to read; to which, undaunted, he replied, 'She'll never be a boy!' Nevertheless Maurice was developing a species of conscience, rendering him trustworthy and obedient out of sight, better, in fact, alone with his own honour and his mother's commands, than with any authority that he could defy. He knew when his father meant to be obeyed, and Gilbert managed him easily; but he warred with Lucy, ruled Sophy, and had

no chivalry for any one but little Albinia, nor obedience except for his mother, and was a terror to maid-servants and elder children. With much of promise, he was anything but an agreeable child, and whilst no one but herself ever punished, contradicted, or complained of him, Albinia had a task that would have made her very uneasy, had not her mind been too fresh and strong for over-sense of responsibility. Each immediate duty in its turn was sufficient for her.

Maurice's shadow-like pursuit of Gilbert often took him off her hands. It might sometimes be troublesome to the elder brother, and now and then rewarded with a petulant rebuff, but Maurice was only the more pertinacious, and on the whole his allegiance was requited with ardent affection and unbounded indulgence. Nay, once when Maurice and his pony, one or both, were swept on by the whole hunt, and obliged to follow the hounds, Gilbert in his anxiety took leaps that he shuddered to remember, while the urchin sat the first gallantly, and though he fell into the next ditch, scrambled up on the instant, and was borne by his spirited pony over two more, amid universal applause. Mr. Nugent himself rode home with the brothers to tell the story; papa and mamma were too much elated at his prowess to scold.

The eventful year 1854 had begun, and General Ferrars was summoned from Canada to a command in the East. On his arrival in England, he wrote to his brother and sister to meet him in London, and the aunts, delighted to gather their children once more round them, sent pressing invitations, only regretting that there was not room enough in the Family Office for the younger branches.

Mr. Ferrars' first measure was to ride to Willow Lawn. Knocking at the door of his sister's morning-room, he found Maurice with a pouting lip, back rounded, and legs twisted, standing upon his elbows, which were planted upon the table on either side of a calico spelling-book. Mr. Kendal stood up straight before the fire, looking distressed and perplexed, and Albinia sat by, a little worn, a little irritable, and with the expression of a wilful victim.

All greeted the new comer warmly, and Maurice exclaimed, 'Mamma, I may have a holiday now!'

'Not till you have learnt your spelling.' There was some sharpness in the tone, and Maurice's shoulder-blades looked sulky.

'In consideration of his uncle,' began Mr. Kendal; but she put her hand on the boy, saying, 'You know we agreed there were to be no holidays for a week, because we did not use the last properly.'

He moved off disconsolately, and his father said, 'I hope you are come to arrange the journey to London. Is Winifred coming with you?'

'No; a hurry and confusion, and the good aunts would be too much for her; you will be the only one for inspection.'

'Yes, take him with you, Maurice,' said Albinia; 'he must see William.'

'You must be the exhibitor, then,' her brother replied.

'Now, Maurice, I know what you are come for, but you ought to know better than to persuade me, when you know there are six good reasons against my going.'

'I know of one worth all the six.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Kendal; 'I have been telling her that she is convincing me that I did wrong in allowing her to burthen herself with this charge.'

'That's nothing to the purpose,' said Albinia; 'having undertaken it, when you all saw the necessity, I cannot forsake it now—'

'If Mrs. Meadows were in the same condition as she was in two months ago, there might be a doubt,' said Mr. Kendal; 'but she is less dependent on your attention, and Lucy and Gilbert are most anxious to devote themselves to her in your absence.'

'I know they all wish to be kind, but if anything went wrong, I should never forgive myself!'

'Not if you went out for pleasure alone,' said her brother; 'but relationship has demands.'

'Of course,' she said, petulantly, 'if Edmund is re-

solved, I must go, but that does not convince me that it is right to leave everything to run riot here.'

Mr. Kendal looked serious, and Mr. Ferrars feared that the winter cares had so far told on her temper, that perplexity made her wilful in self-sacrifice. There was a pause, but just as she began to perceive she had said something wrong, the lesser Maurice burst out in exultation,

'There, it is not indestructible!'

'What mischief have you been about!' The question was needless, for the table was strewn with snips of calico.

'This nasty spelling-book! Lucy said it was called indestructible, because nobody could destroy it, but I've taken my new knife to it. And see there!'

'And now can you make another?' said his uncle.

'I don't want to.'

'Nor *one* either, sir,' said Mr. Kendal. 'What shall we have to tell Uncle William about you! I'm afraid you are one of the chief causes of mamma not knowing how to go to London.'

Maurice did not appear on the way to penitence, but his mother said, 'Bring me your knife.'

He hung down his head, and obeyed without a word. She closed it, and laid it on the mantel-shelf, which served as a sort of pound for properties in sequestration.

'Now, then, go,' she said; 'you are too naughty for me to attend to you.'

'But when will you, mamma?' laying a hand on her dress.

'I don't know. Go away now.'

He slowly obeyed, and as the door shut, she said, 'There!' in a tone as if her view was established.

'You must send him to Fairmead,' said the uncle.

'To "terrify" Winifred? No, no, I know better than that; Gilbert can look after him. 'I don't so much care about that.'

The admission was eagerly hailed, and objection after objection removed, and having recovered her good humour, she was candid, and owned how much she wished

to go. 'I really want to make acquaintance with William. I've never seen him since I came to my senses, and have only taken him on trust from you.'

'I wish equally that he should see you,' said her brother. 'It would be good for him, and I doubt whether he has any conception what you are like.'

'I'd better stay at home, to leave you and Edmund to depict for his benefit a model impossible idol—the normal woman.'

Maurice looked at her, and shook his head.

'No—it would be rather—it and its young one, eh?'

Maurice took both her hands. 'I should not like to tell William what I shall believe if you do not come.'

'Well, what—'

'That Edmund is right, and you have been over-tasked till you are careful and troubled about many things.'

'Only too much bent on generous self-devotion,' said Mr. Kendal, eagerly; 'too unselfish to cast the balance of duties.'

'Hush, Edmund,' said Albinia. 'I don't deserve fine words. I honestly believe I want to do what is right, but I can't be sure what it is, and I have made quite fuss enough, so you two shall decide, and then I shall be made right anyway. Only do it from your consciences.'

They looked at each other, taken aback by the sudden surrender. Mr. Ferrars waited, and her husband said, 'She ought to see her brother. She needs the change, and there is no sufficient cause to detain her.'

'She must be content sometimes to trust,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'Aye, and all that will go wrong, when my back is turned.'

'Let it,' said her brother. 'The right which depends on a single human eye is not good for much. Let the weeds grow, or you can't pull them up.'

'Let the mice play, that the cat may catch them,' said Albinia, striving to hide her care. 'One good effect is, that Edmund has not begun to groan.'

Indeed, in his anxiety that she should consent to enjoy

herself, he had not had time to shrink from the introduction.

Outside the door they found Maurice waiting, his spelling learnt from a fragment of the indestructible spelling-book, and the question followed, 'Now, mamma, you won't say I'm too naughty for you to go to London and see Uncle William?'

'No, my little boy, I mean to trust you, and tell Uncle William that my young soldier is learning the soldier's first duty—obedience.'

'And may I have my knife, mamma?'

Papa had settled that question by himself taking it off the chimney-piece and restoring it. If mamma wished the penance to have been longer, she neither looked it nor said it.

The young people received the decision with acclamation, and the two elder ones vied with one another in attempts to set her mind at rest by undertaking everything, and promising for themselves and the children perfect regularity and harmony. Sophy, with a bluntness that King Lear would have highly disapproved, said, 'She was glad mamma was going, but she knew they should be all at sixes and sevens. She would do her best, and very bad it would be.'

'Not if you don't make up your mind beforehand that it must be bad,' said her uncle.

Sophy smiled; she was much less impervious to cheerful auguries, and spoke with gladness of the pleasure it would give her friend G  nevi  ve to see Mrs. Kendal.

Mr. Ferrars had a short interview with Ulick, and was amused by observing that little Maurice had learnt as much Irish as Ulick had dropped. After the passing fever about his O had subsided, he was parting with some of his ultra-nationality. The whirr of his R's and his Irish idioms were far less perceptible; and though a word of attack on his country would put him on his mettle, and bring out the Kelt in full force, yet in his reasonable state, his good sense and love of order showed an evident development, and instead of contending that Galway was the most perfect county in the world, he only said it might yet be so.

'Isn't he a noble fellow?' cried Albinia, warmly.

'Yes,' said her brother; 'I doubt whether all the O'Mores put together have ever made such a conquest as he has.'

'It was fun to see how the aunts were dismayed to find one of the horde in full force here. I believe it was as a measure of precaution that they took Lucy away. I was very glad for Lucy to go, but hers was not exactly the danger.'

'Ha!' said Maurice; and Albinia blushed. Whereupon he said interrogatively, 'Hem?' which made her laugh so consciously, that he added, 'Don't you go and be romantic about either of your young ladies, or there will be a general burning of fingers.'

'If you knew all our secrets, Maurice, you would think me a model of prudence and forbearance.'

'Ho!' was his next interjection, 'so much the worse. For my own part, I don't expect prudence will come to you naturally till the little Awk has a lover.'

'Won't it come any other way?'

'Yes, in *one* way,' he said, gravely.

'And that way is not easily found by those who have neither humility nor patience,' she said, sadly; 'who rush on their own will.'

'Nay, Albinia, it is being sought, I do believe; and remember the lines—

"Thine own mild energy bestow,
And deepen while thou bidst it flow,
More calm our stream of love."

Forced to resign herself to her holiday, Albinia did so with a good grace, in imitation of her brother, who assured her that he had brought a bottle of Lethe, and had therein drowned wife, children, and parish. Mr. Kendal's spirits, as usual, rose higher every mile from Bayford, and they were a very lively party when they arrived in Mayfair.

The good aunts were delighted to have round them all those whom they called their children; all except Fred, whom the new arrangements had sent to rejoin his regiment in Ireland.

Sinewy, spare, and wiry, with keen grey eyes under straight brows, narrow temples, a sunburnt face, and alert, upright bearing and quick step, William Ferrars was every inch a soldier; but nothing so much struck Mr. and Mrs. Kendal as the likeness to their little Maurice, though it consisted more in air and gesture, than in feature. His speech was brief and to the point, softened into delicately-polished courtesy towards womankind, in the condescension of strength to weakness—the quality he evidently thought their chief characteristic.

Albinia was amused as she watched him with grown-up eyes, and compared present with past impressions. She could now imagine that she had been an inconvenient charge to a young soldier brother, and that he had been glad to make her over to the aunts; only petting and indulging her as a child; looking down on her fancies, and smiling at her sauciness when she was an enthusiastic maiden—treatment which she had so much resented, that she had direfully offended Maurice by pronouncing William a mere martinet, when she was hurt at his neither reading the *Curse of Kehama*, nor entering into her plans for Fairmead school.

Having herself become a worker, she could better appreciate a man who had seen and acted instead of reading, recollected herself as an emanation of conceit, and felt shy and anxious, even more for her husband than for herself. How would the scholar and the soldier fare together? and could she and Maurice keep them from wearying of each other? She had little trust in her own fascinations, though she saw the General's eye approvingly fixed on her, and believing herself to be a more pleasing object in her womanly bloom than in her unformed girlhood.

'How does the Montreal affair go on?' she asked.

'What affair?'

'Fred and Miss Kinnaird.'

'I am sorry to say he has not put it out of his head.'

'Surely she is a very nice person.'

'Pshaw! He has no right to think of a wife these dozen years.'

‘Not even think? When he is not to have one at any rate till he is a field officer!’

‘And he is a fool to have one then. A mere encumbrance to himself and the entire corps.’

‘Yes, I know,’ said Albinia; ‘she always gets the best cabin.’

‘And that is no place for her! No man, as I have told Fred over and over again, ought to drag a woman into hardships for which she is not fitted, and where she interferes with his effectiveness and the comfort of every one else.’

The identical lecture of twelve years since, when he had feared Albinia’s becoming this inconvenient appendage! If he had repeated it on all like occasions, she did not wonder that it had wearied his aide-de-camp.

‘Perhaps,’ she said, ‘the backwoods may have fitted Miss Emily for the life; and I can’t but be glad of Fred’s having been steady to anything.’

Considering this speech like the Kehama days, the General went on to dilate on the damage that marriage was to the ‘service,’ removing the best officers, first from the mess, and then from the army.

‘What a pity William was born too late to be a Knight of St. John!’ said Albinia.

All laughed, but she doubted whether he were pleased, for he addressed himself to one of the aunts, while Maurice spoke to her in an under tone—‘I believe he is quite right. Homes are better for the individual man, but not for the service. How remarkably the analogy holds with *this* other service!’

‘You mean what St. Paul says of the married and unmarried?’

‘I always think he and his sayings are the most living lessons I know on the requirements of the other army.’

Albinia mused on the insensible change in Maurice. He had not embraced his profession entirely by choice. It had always been understood that one of the younger branches must take the family living; and as Fred had spurned study, he had been bred up to consider it as his fate, and if he had ever had other wishes, he had entirely

accepted his destiny, and sincerely turned to his vocation. The knowledge that he must be a clergyman had ruled him and formed him from his youth, and acting through him on his sister, had rendered her more than the accomplished, prosperous young lady her aunts meant to have made her. Yet, even up to a year or two after his Ordination, there had been a sense of sacrifice; he loved sporting, and even balls, and it had been an effort to renounce them. He had avoided coming to London because his keen enjoyment of society tended to make him discontented with his narrow sphere; she had even known him to hesitate to ride with the staff at a review, lest he should make himself liable to repinings. And now how entirely had all this passed away, not merely by outgrowing the enterprising temper and boyish habits, nor by contentment in a happy home, but by the sufficiency and rest of *his* service, the engrossment in the charge from his great Captain. Without being himself aware of it, he had ceased to distrust a holiday, because it was no longer a temptation; and his animation and mirth were the more free, because self-regulation was so thoroughly established, that restraint was no longer felt.

Mrs. Annesley was talking of the little Kendals, who she had ruled should be at Fairmead.

'No,' said Maurice, 'Albinia thought her son too mighty for Winifred. Our laudable efforts at cousinly friendship usually produce war-whoops that bring the two mammas each to snatch her own offspring from the fray, with a scolding for the sake of appearances though believing the other the only guilty party.'

'Now, Maurice,' cried Albinia, 'you confess how fond Mary is of setting people to rights.'

'Well—when Maurice bullies Alby.'

'Aye, you talk of the mammas, and you only want to make out poor Maurice the aggressor.'

'Never mind, they will work in better than if they were fabulous children. Ah, you are going to contend that yours is a fabulous child. Take care I don't come on you with the indestructible—'

'Take care I don't come on you with Mary's lessons to Colonel Bury on the game-law.'

'Does it not do one good to see those two quarelling just like old times?' exclaimed one aunt to the other.

'And William looking on as contemptuous as ever!' said Albinia.

'Not at all. I rejoice to have this week with you. I should like to see your boy. Maurice says he is a thorough young soldier.'

Mr. Kendal looked pleased.

The man of study had a *penchant* for the man of action, and the brothers-in-law were drawing together. Mars, the great geographical master, was but opening his gloomy school on the Turkish soil, and the world was discovering its ignorance beyond the Pinnock's Catechisms of its youth. Maurice treated Mr. Kendal as a dictionary, and his stores of Byzantine, Othman, and Austrian lore chimed in with the perceptions of the General, who, going by military maps, described plans of operations which Mr. Kendal could hardly believe he had not found in history, while he could as little credit that Mr. Kendal had neither studied tactics, nor seen the spots of which he could tell such serviceable minutiae.

They had their heads together over the map the whole evening, and the next morning, when the General began to ask questions about Turkish, his sister was proud to hear her husband answering with the directness and precision dear to a military man.

'That's an uncommonly learned man, Albinia's husband,' began the General, as soon as he had started with his brother on a round of errands.

'I never met a man of more profound and universal knowledge.'

'I don't see that he is so grave and unlike other people. Fred reported that he was silence itself, and she might as well have married Hamlet's ghost.'

'Fred saw him at a party,' said Maurice; then remembering that this might not be explanatory, he added, 'He shines most when at ease, and every year since his marriage has improved and enlivened him.'

'I am satisfied. I hardly knew how to judge, though I did not think myself called upon to remonstrate against the marriage, as the aunts wished. I knew I might depend on you, and I thought it high time that she should be settled.'

'I have been constantly admiring her discernment, for I own that at first his reserve stood very much in my way, but since she has raised his spirits, and taught him to exert himself, he has been a most valuable brother to me.'

'Then you think her happy? I was surprised to see her such a fine-looking woman; my aunts had croaked so much about his children and his mother, that I thought she would be worn to a shadow.'

'Very happy. She has casual troubles, and a great deal of work, but that is what she is made for.'

'How does she get on with his children?'

'Hearty love for them has carried her through the first difficulties, which appalled me, for they had been greatly mismanaged. I am afraid that she has not been able to undo some of the past evil; and with all her good intentions, I am sometimes afraid whether she is old enough to deal with grown-up young people.'

'You don't mean that Kendal's children are grown up? I should think him younger than I am.'

'He is so, but civil servants marry early, and not always wisely; and the son is about twenty. Poor Albinia dotes on him, and has done more for him than ever his father did; but the lad is weak and tender every way, with no stamina, moral or physical, and with just enough property to do him harm. He has been at Oxford and has failed, and now he is in the militia; but what can be expected of a boy in a country town, with nothing to do? I did not like his looks last week, and I don't think his being there, always idle, is good for that little manly scamp of Albinia's own.'

'Why don't they put him into the service?'

'He is too old.'

'Not too old for the cavalry!'

'He can ride, certainly, and is a tall, good-looking fel-

low; but I should not have thought him the stuff to make a dragoon. He has always been puling and delicate, unfit for school, wanting force.'

'Wanting discipline,' said the General. 'I have seen a year in a good regiment make an excellent officer of that very stamp of youngster, just wanting a mould to give him substance.'

'The regiment should be a *very* good one,' said Mr. Ferrars; 'he would be only too easily drawn in by the bad style of subaltern.'

'Put him into the 25th Lancers,' said the General, 'and set Fred to look after him. Rattlepate as he is, he can take excellent care of a lad to whom he takes a fancy, and if Albinia asked him, he would do it with all his heart.'

'I wish you would propose it, though I am afraid his father will never consent. I would do a great deal to get him away before he has led little Maurice into harm.'

This consideration moved the Rector of Fairmead himself to broach the subject; but neither Mr. Kendal nor Albinia could think of venturing their fragile son in the army, though assured that there was little chance that the 25th Lancers would be summoned to the east, and they would only hold out hopes of little Maurice by and by.

Albinia's martial ardour was revived as she listened with greater grasp of comprehension to subjects familiar in her girlhood. She again met old friends of her father, the lingering glories of the Peninsula and Waterloo, who liked her for her own sake as well as for her father's, while Maurice looked on, amused by her husband's silent pride in her, and her hourly progress in the regard of the General, who began to talk of making a long visit to Fairmead, after what he expected would be a slight demonstration on the Danube. He even began to regret the briefness of the time that he could spend in their society.

Much was crowded into that week, but Albinia contrived to find an hour for a call on her little French friend, to whom she had already forwarded the parcels she had brought from home—a great barm-brack from Biddy, and

a store of delicate convent confections from Hadminster.

She was set down at a sober old house in the lawyers' quarter of the world, and conducted to a pretty, though rather littered drawing-room, where she found a delicate-looking young mamma, and various small children.

'I'm so glad,' said little Mrs. Rainsforth, 'that you have been able to come; it will be such a pleasure to dear Miss Durant;' and while one of the children was sent to summon the governess, the lady continued, nervously but warmly; 'I hope you will think Miss Durant looking well; I am afraid she shuts herself up too much. I'm sure she is the greatest comfort, the greatest blessing to us.'

Albinia's reply was prevented by a rush of children, followed by the dear little trim, slight figure. There was no fear that G  nevi  ve did not look well or happy. Her olive complexion was healthy; her dark eyes lustrous with gladness; her smile frank and unquelled; her movements full of elastic life.

She led the way to the back parlour, dingy by nature, but bearing living evidence to the charm which she infused into any room. Scratched table, desks, copybooks, and worn grammars had more the air of a comfortable occupation than of the shabby haunt of irksome taskwork. There were flowers in the window, and the children's treasures were arranged with taste. G  nevi  ve loved her school-room, and showed off its little advantages with pretty exultation. If Mrs. Kendal could only see how well it looked with the curtains down, after tea!

And then came the long, long talk over home affairs, and the history of half the population of Bayford, G  nevi  ve making inquiries, and drinking in the answers as if she could not make enough of her enjoyment.

Not till all the rest had been discussed, did she say, with dropped eyelids, and a little blush, 'Is Mr. Gilbert Kendal quite strong?'

'Thank you, he has been much better this winter, and so useful and kind in nursing grandmamma!'

'Yes, he was always kind.'

‘He was going to beg me to remember him to you, but he broke off, and said you would not care.’

‘I care for all goodness towards me,’ answered Gèneviève, lifting her eyes with a flash of inquiry.

‘I am afraid he is as bad as ever, poor fellow,’ said Albinia, with a little smile and sigh; ‘but he has behaved very well. I must tell you that you were in the same train with him on his journey from Oxford, and he was ashamed to meet your eye.’

‘Ah, I remember well. I thought I saw him. I was bringing George and Fanny from a visit to their aunts, and I was sure it must be Mr. Gilbert.’

‘As prudent as ever, Gèneviève.’

‘It would not have been right,’ she said, blushing; ‘but it was such a treat to see a Bayford face, that I had nearly sprung out of the waiting-room to speak to him at the first impulse.’

‘My poor little exile!’ said Albinia.

‘No, that is not my name. Call me my aunt’s breadwinner. That’s my pride! I mean my cause of thankfulness. I could not have earned half so much at home.’

‘I hope indeed you have a home here.’

‘That I have,’ she fervently answered. ‘Oh, without being a homeless orphan, one does not learn what kind hearts there are. Mr. and Mrs. Rainsforth seemed only to fear that they should not be good enough to me.’

‘Do you mean that you found it a little oppressive?’

‘*Fi donc*, Madame! Yet I must own that with her timid uneasy way, and his so perfect courtesy, they did alarm me a little at first. I pitied them, for I saw them so resolved not to let me feel myself *de trop*, that I knew I was in their way.’

‘Did not that vex you?’

‘Why, I suppose they set their inconvenience against the needs of their children, and my concern was to do my duty, and be as little troublesome as possible. They pressed me to spend my evenings with them, but I thought that would be too hard on them, so I told them I preferred the last hours alone, and I do not come in unless there are others to prevent their being *tête-à-tête*.’

‘Very wise. And do you not find it lonely?’

‘It is my time for reading—my time for letters—my time for being at home!’ cried G  n  vi  ve. ‘Now however that I hope I am no longer a weight on them, Mrs. Rainsforth will sometimes ask me to come and sing to him, or read aloud, when he comes home so tired that he cannot speak, and her voice is weak. Alas! they are both so fragile, so delicate.’

Her soul was evidently with them and with her charges, of whom there was so much to say, that the carriage came all too soon to hurry Albinia away from the sight of that buoyant sweetness and capacity of happiness.

She was rather startled by Miss Ferrars saying, ‘By-the-by, Albinia, how was it that you never told us of the development of the Infant prodigy?’

‘I don’t know what you mean, Aunt Gertrude.’

‘Don’t you remember that boy, that Mrs. Dusauroy Cavendish’s son, whom that poor little companion of hers used to call *l’Enfant prodigue*? I did not know he was a neighbour of yours, as I find from Lucy.’

‘What did Lucy tell you about him? She did not meet him!’ cried Albinia, endeavouring not to betray her alarm. ‘I mean, did she meet him?’

‘Indeed,’ said Miss Ferrars, ‘you should have warned us if you had any objection, my dear.’

‘Well, but what did happen?’

‘Oh, nothing alarming, I assure you. They met at a ball at Brighton; Lucy introduced him, and said he was your vicar’s nephew; they danced together. I think only once.’

‘I wish you had mentioned it. When did it happen?’

‘I can hardly tell. I think she had been about a fortnight with us, but she seemed so indifferent that I should never have thought it worth mentioning. I remember my sister thought of asking him to a little evening party of ours, and Lucy dissuading her. Now, really, Albinia, don’t look as if we had been betraying our trust. You never gave us any reason to think—’

‘No, no. I beg your pardon, dear aunt. I hope there’s

no harm done. If I could have thought of his turning up, I would—but I hope it is all right.'

Such good accounts came from both homes, and the General was so unwilling to part with his brother and sister, that he persuaded them to accompany him to Southampton for embarkation. They all felt that these last days, precious now, might be doubly precious by-and-by, and alone with them and free from the kindly scrutiny of the good aunts, William expanded and evinced more warm fraternal feeling than he had ever manifested. He surprised his sister by thanking her warmly for having come to meet him. 'I am glad to have been with you, Albinia; I am glad to have seen your husband. I have told Maurice that I am heartily rejoiced to see you in such excellent hands.'

'You must come and see the children, and know him better.'

'I hope so, when this affair is over, and I expect it will be soon settled. Anyway, I am glad we have been together. If we meet again, we will try to see more of one another.'

He had said much more to his brother, expressing regret that he had been so much separated from his sister. Thorough soldier as he was, and ardent for active service, the sight of her and her husband had renewed gentler thoughts, and he was so far growing old that the idea of home and rest came invitingly before him. He was softened at the parting, and when he wrung their hands for the last time on the deck of the steamer, they were glad that his last words were, 'God bless you.'

There had been some uncertainty as to the time of his sailing, and Fairmead and Bayford had been told that unless their travellers arrived by the last reasonable train on Friday, they were not to be expected till the same time on Saturday, Maurice having concocted a scheme for crossing by several junction lines, so as to save waiting; but they had not reckoned on the discourtesies of two rival companies whose lines met at the same station, and the southern train was only in time to hear the parting snort of the engine that it professed to catch.

The Ferrars' nature, above all when sore with farewells, was not made to submit to having time wasted by treacherous trains on a cold wintry day, and at a small new station, with an apology for a waiting-room, no book-stall, and nothing to eat but greasy gingerbread and hard apples.

Maurice relieved his feelings by heartily rowing all the officials, but he could obtain no redress, as he knew full well the whole time, nor would any train pick them up for full three hours.

So indignant was he, that amusement rendered Albinia patient, especially when he took to striding up and down the platform, devising cases in which the delay might be actionable, and vituperating the placability of Mr. Kendal, who, having wrapt up his wife in plaids and seated her on the top of the luggage, had set his back to the wall, and was lost to the present world in a book.

'Never mind, Maurice,' said Albinia; 'in any other circumstances, we should think three hours of each other a great boon.'

'If anything could be an aggravation, it would be to see Albinia philosophical.'

'You make me so on the principle of the Helots and Spartans.'

It was possible to get to Hadminster by half-past seven, and on to Bayford by nine o'clock, but Fairmead lay further from the line, and the next train did not stop at the nearest station, so Maurice agreed to sleep at Bayford that night; and this settled, set out with his sister to explore the neighbourhood for eatables and church architecture. They made an ineffectual attempt to rouse Mr. Kendal to go with them, but he was far too deep in his book, and only muttered something about looking after the luggage. They found a stale loaf of bread, and a hideous church, but it was a merry walk, and brought them back in their liveliest mood, which lasted even to pronouncing it 'great fun' that the Hadminster flies were all at a ball, and that the omnibus must convey them home by the full moonlight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SLOWLY the omnibus rumbled over the wooden bridge, and then with a sudden impulse it thundered up to the front door.

Albinia jumped out, and caught Sophy in her arms, exclaiming, 'And how are you all, my dear?'

'We had quite given you up,' Gilbert was saying. 'The fire is in the library,' he added, as Mr. Kendal was opening the drawing-room door, and closing it in haste at the sight of a pale, uninviting patch of moonlight, and the rush of a blast of cold wind.

'And how is grandmamma? and the children? My Sophy, you don't look well; and where's Lucy?'

Ere she could receive an answer, down jumped, two steps at a time, a half-dressed figure, all white stout legs and arms which were speedily hugging mamma.

'There's my man!' said Mr. Kendal, 'a good boy, I know.'

'No!' cried the bold voice.

'No? (incredulously) what have you been doing?'

'I broke the conservatory with the marble dog, and—' he looked at Gilbert.

'There's my brave boy,' said Mr. Kendal, who had suffered so much from his elder son's equivocation as to be ready to overlook anything for the sake of truth. 'Here, Uncle Maurice, shake hands with your godson, who always tells truth.'

The urchin folded his arms on his bosom, and looked like a young Bonaparte.

'Where's your hand?' said his uncle. 'Won't you give it to me?'

'No.'

'He will be wiser to-morrow, if you are so good as to try him again,' said Albinia, who knew nothing did him more harm than creating a commotion by his caprices; 'he is up too late, and fractious with sleepiness. Go to bed now, my dear.'

'I shall not be wiser to-morrow,' quoth the child, marching out of the room in defiance.

'Monkey! what's the matter now?' exclaimed Albinia; 'I suppose you have all been spoiling him. But what's become of Lucy?'

'Gilbert said she was at the Dusautoys,' replied Sophy; 'but if you would but come to grandmamma! She found out that you were expected, and she is in such a state that we have not known what to do.'

'I'll come; only, Sophy dear, please order tea and something to eat. Your uncle looks ravenous.'

She broke off, as there advanced into the room a being like Lucy, but covered with streams and spatters of flowing sable tears, like a heraldic decoration, over face, neck, and dress.

All unconscious, she came with outstretched hands and words of welcome, but an astonished cry of 'Lucy!' met her, and casting her eyes on her dress, she screamed, 'Oh goodness! it's ink!'

'Where can you have been? what have you been doing?'

'I—don't know—Oh! it was the great inkstand, and not the scent—Oh! it is all over me! It's in my hair!' shuddering. 'Oh, dear! oh, dear! I shall never get it out!' and off she rushed, followed by Gilbert, and was soon heard calling the maids to bring hot water to her room.

'What is all this?' asked Mr. Kendal.

'I do not know,' mournfully answered Sophy.

Albinia left the library, and taking a candle, went into the empty drawing-room. The moonlight shone white upon the table, and showed the large cut-glass ink-bottle in a pool of its own contents; and the sofa-cover had black spots and stains as if it had partaken of the libation.

Sophy saw, and stood like a statue.

'You know nothing, I am sure,' said Albinia.

'Nothing!' repeated Sophy, with a blank look of wretchedness.

'If you please, ma'am,' said the nurse at the door.

'could you be kind enough to come to Mrs. Meadows? she will be quieter when she has seen you.'

'Sophy dear, we must leave it now,' said Albinia. 'You must see to their tea; they have had nothing since breakfast.'

She hastened to the sick room, where she found Mrs. Meadows in a painful state of agitation and excitement. The nurse said that until this evening, she had been as usual, but finding that Mrs. Kendal was expected, she had been very restless; Miss Kendal was out, and neither Miss Sophy nor Mr. Gilbert could soothe her.

She eagerly grasped the hand of Albinia who bent down to kiss her, and asked how she had been.

'Oh! my dear, very unwell, very. They should not leave me to myself so long, my dear. I thought you would never come back;' and she began to cry, and say, 'no one cared for an old woman.'

Albinia assured her that she was not going away, and restrained her own eager and bewildered feelings to tranquillize her, by prosing on in the lengthy manner which always soothed the poor old lady. It was a great penance, in her anxiety to investigate the mysteries that seemed to swarm in the house, but at last she was able to leave the bedside, though not till she had been twice summoned to tea.

Sophy, lividly pale, was presiding with trembling hands; Gilbert, flushed and nervous, waiting on every one, and trying to be lively and at ease, but secret distress was equally traceable in each.

She durst only ask after the children, and heard that her little namesake had been as usual as good and sweet as child could be. And Maurice?

'He's a famous fellow, went on capitally,' said Gilbert.

'Yes, till yesterday,' hoarsely gasped Sophy, sincerity wrenching out the protest by force.

'Ah, what has he been doing to the conservatory?'

'He let the little marble dog down from the morning-room window with my netting silk; it fell, and made a great hole,' said Sophy.

'What, as a form of dawdling at his lessons?'

‘Yes; but he has not been at all tiresome about them except to-day and yesterday.’

‘And he has told the exact truth,’ said Mr. Kendal; ‘his gallant confession has earned the little cannon I promised him.’

‘I believe,’ said Albinia, ‘that it would be greater merit in Maurice to learn forbearance than to speak truth and be praised for it. I have never seen his truth really tried.’

‘I value truth above all other qualities,’ said Mr. Kendal.

‘So do I,’ said Albinia, ‘and it is my greatest joy in that little fellow; but some time or other it must cost him something, or it will not be tested.’

Mr. Kendal did not like this, and repeated that he must have his cannon. Albinia fancied that she heard something like a groan from Gilbert.

When they broke up for the night, she threw her arm round Sophy as they went upstairs, saying, ‘My poor dear, you look half dead. Have things been going very wrong?’

‘Only these two days,’ said Sophy; ‘and I don’t know that they have either. I am glad you are come!’

‘What kind of things?’ said Albinia, following her into her room.

‘Don’t ask,’ at first began Sophy; but then, frowning as if she could hardly speak, she added, ‘I mean, I don’t know whether it is my own horrid way, or that there is really an atmosphere of something I don’t make out.’

‘Didn’t you tell me Lucy was at the Vicarage?’ said Albinia, suddenly.

‘Gilbert said yes, when I asked if she could be with the Dusautoys,’ said Sophy, ‘when grandmamma wanted her and she did not come. Mamma, please don’t think of what I said, for very likely it is only that I am cross, because of being left alone with grandmamma so long this evening, and then Maurice being slow at his lessons.’

‘You are not cross, Sophy; you are worn out, and perplexed, and unhappy.’

‘Oh! not now you are come home,’ and Sophy laid

her head on her shoulder and cried with relief and exhaustion. Albinia caressed her, saying,

‘My trust, my mainstay, my poor Sophy! There, go to bed and sleep, and don’t think of it now. Only first tell me one thing, is that Algernon at home?’

‘No!’ said Sophy, vehemently, ‘certainly not!’

Albinia breathed more freely.

‘Everybody,’ said Sophy, collecting herself, ‘has gone on well, Gilbert and Lucy have been as kind as could be, and Maurice very good, but yesterday morning he went on in his foolish way at lessons, and Gilbert took him out riding before he had finished them. They came in very late, and I think Maurice must have been overtired, for he was so idle this morning, that I threatened to tell, and put him in mind of the cannon papa promised him; but somehow I must have managed badly, for he only grew more defiant, and ended by letting the marble dog out of the window, so that it went through the roof of the conservatory.’

‘Yes, of course it was your fault, or the marble dog’s,’ said Albinia, smiling, and stroking her fondly. ‘Ah! we ought to have come home at the fixed time, and not left you to their mercy; but one could not hurry away from William, when he was so much more sorry to leave us than we ever expected.’

‘Oh! mamma, don’t talk so! We were so glad. If only we could help being such a nuisance!’

Albinia contrived to laugh, and withdrew, intending to make a visit of inquiry to Lucy, but she could not refuse herself the refreshment of a kiss to the little darling who could have no guile to hide, no wrong to confess. She had never so much realized the value of the certainty of innocence as when she hung over the crib, and thought that when those dark fringed lids were lifted, the eyes would flash with delight at meeting her, without one drawback.

Suddenly a loud roar burst from the little room next to Gilbert’s, in which Maurice had lately been installed. She hurried swiftly in that direction, but a passage and some steps lay between, and Gilbert had been beforehand with her.

She heard the words, 'I don't care! I don't care if it is manly! I will tell; I can't bear this!' then as his brother seemed to be hushing him, he burst out again, 'I wouldn't have minded if papa wouldn't give me the cannon, but he will, and that's as bad as telling a lie! I can't sleep if you won't let me off my promise!'

Trembling from head to foot, her voice low and quivering with concentrated, incredulous wrath, Albinia advanced. 'Are you teaching my child falsehood?' she said; and Gilbert felt as if her look were worse to him than a thousand deaths.

'O mamma! mamma! Gilbert! let me tell her,' cried the child; and Albinia throwing herself on her knees, clasped him in her arms, as though snatching him from the demon of deceit.

'Tell all, Maurice,' said Gilbert, folding his arms; 'it is to your credit, if you would believe so. I shall be glad to have this misery ended anyway! It was all for the sake of others.'

'Mamma,' Maurice said, in the midst of these mutterings of his unhappy brother, 'I can't have the cannon without papa knowing it at all. I couldn't shake hands with Uncle Maurice for telling the truth, for I had not told it.'

'And what is it, my boy? tell me now; no one can hinder you.'

'I scratched and fought him—Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy—I kicked down the decanter of wine. They told me it was manly not to tell, and I promised.'

He was crying with the exceeding pain and distress of a child whose tears were rare, and Albinia rocked him in her arms.

Gilbert cautiously shut the door, and said sadly, 'Maurice behaved nobly, if he would only believe so. You would be proud of your son if you had seen him. They wanted to make him drink wine, and he was fighting them off.'

'And where were you, Gilbert, you to whom I trusted him?'

'I could not help it,' said Gilbert; then as her lip

curled with contempt, and her eye spoke disappointment, he cast himself on the ground, exclaiming, 'Oh, if you knew how I have been mixed up with others, and what I have gone through, you would pity me. Oh, Maurice, don't cry, when I would give worlds to be like you. Why do you let him cry? Why don't you tell him what a brave noble boy he is!'

'I don't know what to think or believe,' said Albinia, coldly; but returning vehemently to her child, she continued, 'Maurice, my dear, no one is angry with you! You, at least, I can depend on. Tell me where you have been, and what they have been doing to you.'

Even with Gilbert's explanations, she could hardly understand Maurice's narrative, but she gathered that on Thursday, the brothers had ridden out, and were about to turn homewards, when Archie Tritton, of whom to her vexation Maurice spoke familiarly, had told Gilbert that a friend was waiting for him at the inn connected with the training stables, three miles further on. Gilbert had demurred, but was told the matter would brook no delay, and yielded on being pressed. He tried to suppress the friend's name, but Maurice had called him Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy.

While Gilbert was engaged with him, Tritton had introduced Maurice to the horses and stable boys, whose trade had inspired him with such emulation, that he broke off in the midst of his confession to ask whether he could be a jockey and also a gentleman. All this had detained them till so late, that they had been drawn into staying to dinner. Maurice had gone on very happily, secure that he was right in Gilbert's hands, and only laying up a few curious words for explanation; but when he was asked to drink wine, he stoutly answered that mamma did not allow it.

Idle mischief prompted Dusautoy and Tritton to set themselves to overpower his resistance. Gilbert's feeble remonstrances were treated as a jest, and Algernon, who could brook no opposition, swore that he would conquer the little prig. Maurice found himself pinioned by strong arms, but determined and spirited, he made a vigorous

struggle, and so judiciously aimed a furious kick, that Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy staggered back, stumbling against the table, and causing a general overthrow.

The victory was with Maurice, but warned as he had often been against using his natural weapons, he thought himself guilty of a great crime. The others, including, alas ! Gilbert, strove to persuade him it was a joke, and, above all, to bind him to silence, for Tritton and Dusautoy would never have ventured so far, could they have imagined the possibility of such terms as those on which he lived with his parents. They attacked the poor child on the score of his manly aspirations, telling him it was babyish to tell mamma and sisters everything, a practice fit for girls, not for boys or men. These assurances extracted a pledge of secrecy, which was kept as long as his mother was absent, and only rendered him reckless by the sense that he had forfeited the prize of good conduct ; but the sight of her renewed the instinct of confidence, and his father's reliance on his truth so acted on his sense of honour, that he could not hold his peace.

'May I tell papa ? and will he let me have the cannon ?' he finished.

'You shall certainly tell him, my dear, dear little boy, and we will see what he says about the cannon,' she said, fervently kissing him. 'It will be some comfort for him to hear how *you* have behaved, my precious little man. I thank God with all my heart that He has saved you from putting anything before truth. I little thought I was leaving you to a tempter !'

The child did not fully understand her. His was a very simple nature, and he was tired out by conflicting emotions. His breast was relieved, and his mother caressed him ; he cared for nothing more, and drawing her hand so as to rest his cheek on it, he looked up in her face with soft weary happiness in his eyes, then let the lids sink over them, and fell peacefully asleep, while the others talked on. 'At least you will do me the poor justice of believing it was not willingly,' said Gilbert.

'I wish you would not talk to me,' she answered, averting her face, and speaking low as if to cut the heart ;

'I don't want to reproach you, and I can't speak to you properly.'

'If you would only hear me, my only friend and helper! But it was all that was wanting! I have forfeited even your toleration! I wonder why I was born!'

He was taking up his light to depart, but Albinia's fear of her own temper made her suspect that she had spoken vindictively, and she said, 'What can I do, Gilbert? Here is this poor child, whom I trusted to you, who can never again be ignorant of the sound of evil words, and only owes it to God's mercy on his brave spirit that this has not been the beginning of destruction. I feel as if you had been trying to snatch away his soul!'

'And will you, can you not credit,' said Gilbert, nearly inaudibly, 'that I did not act by my free will? I had no notion that any such thing could befall him, and would never have let them try to silence him, but to shield others.'

'Others! Yes, Archie Tritton and Algernon Dusautoy! I know what your free will is in their hands, and yet I thought you cared for your brother enough to guard him, if not yourself.'

'If you knew the coercion,' muttered Gilbert. 'I protest, as I would to my dying day, that I had no intention of going near the stables when I set out, and would never have consented could I have helped it!'

'And why could not you help it?'

Gilbert gasped. 'Tritton brought me a message from Dusautoy, insisting on my meeting him there. It was too late to take Maurice home, and I could not send him with Archie. I expected only to exchange a few words at the door. It was Tritton who took Maurice away to the stables.'

'I hear, but I do not see the compulsion, only the extraordinary weakness that leads you everywhere after those men.'

'I must tell you, I suppose,' groaned Gilbert; 'I can bear anything but this. There's a miserable money entanglement that lays me under a certain obligation to Dusautoy.'

'Your father believed you had told him of all your debts,' she said, in a tone of increased scorn and disappointment.

'I did—I mean—Oh! Mrs. Kendal, believe me, I intended to have told him the utmost farthing—I thought I had done so—but this was a thing—Dusautoy had persuaded me into half consenting to have some wine with him from a cheating Portuguese—then ordered more than ever I knew of, and the man went and became bankrupt, and sent in a great abominable bill that I no more owed, nor had reason to expect than my horse.'

'So you preferred intriguing with this man to applying openly to your father?'

'It was no doing of mine. It was forced upon me, and, in fact, the account was mixed up with his. It was the most evil hour of my life when I consented. I've not had a moment's peace or happiness since, and it was the promise of the bill receipted that led me to this place.'

'And why was this place chosen for the meeting? You and Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy live only too near one another.'

'He is not at the Vicarage,' faltered Gilbert.

Albinia suddenly grew pale with apprehension. 'Gilbert,' she said, 'there is only one thing that could make this business worse;' and as she saw his change of countenance, she continued, 'Then it is so, and Lucy is his object.'

'He did not speak, but his face was that of a convicted traitor, and fresh perceptions crowded on her, as she exclaimed, horror struck, 'The ink! Yes, when *you* said she was with the Dusautoys! I understand! He has been in hiding, he has been here! And this expedition was to arrange a clandestine meeting between them under your father's own roof! You conniving! you who said you would sooner see your sister sold to Legree!'

'It is all true,' said Gilbert, moodily, his elbows on the table and his face in his hands, 'and if the utmost misery for weeks past could be any atonement, it would be mine. But at least I have done nothing willingly to bring

them together. I have only gone on in the hope and trust that I was some protection to poor Lucy.

‘Fine protection,’ sighed Albinia. ‘And how has it been? how does it stand?’

‘Why, they met at Brighton, I believe. She used to walk on the chain pier before breakfast, and he met her there. If he chooses, he can make any one do what he likes, because he does not understand *no* for an answer. Then when she came home, he used to meet her on the bridge, when you sent her out for a turn in the evening, and sometimes she would make me take her out walking to meet him. Don’t you see how utterly miserable it was for me? when they had volunteered this help all out of kindness, it was impossible for me to speak to you.’

Albinia made a sound of contempt, and said, ‘Go on.’

‘That time when you and Mr. Hope saw them, Lucy was frightened, and they had a quarrel, he went away, and I hoped and trusted it had died out. I heard no more till yesterday, when I was dragged into giving him this meeting. It seems that he had only just discovered your absence, and wanted to take the opportunity of seeing her. I was in hopes you would have come back; I assured him you would; but he chose to wait till evening, and then Lucy was to meet him in the conservatory. Poor Lucy, you must not be very angry with her, for she was much averse to it, and I enclosed a letter from her to forbid him to come. I thought all was safe, till I actually heard their voices, and grandmamma got into an agitation, and Sophy was running about wild to find Lucy. When you came home, papa’s opening the door frightened Lucy, and it seems that Dusautoy thought that she was going to faint and scream, and laid hold of the ink instead of the eau-de-cologne. There! I believe the ink would have betrayed it without me. Now you have heard everything, Mrs. Kendal, and can believe there is not a more wretched and miserable creature breathing than I am.’

Albinia slowly rose, and put her hand to her brow, as though confused with the tissue of deceit and double dealing.

'Oh! Mrs. Kendal, will you not speak to me! I solemnly declare that I have told you all.'

'I am thinking of your father.'

With a gesture of acquiescent anguish and despair, he let her pass, held open the door, and closed it softly, so as not to awaken the happy sleeper.

'Good night,' she said, coldly, and turned away, but his mournful, resigned 'Good night,' was so utterly broken down that her heart was touched, and turning she said, 'Good night, Gilbert, I am sorry for you; I believe it is weakness, and not wickedness.'

She held out her hand, but instead of being shaken, it was pressed to his lips, and the fingers were wet with his tears.

Feeling as though the bad dreams of a night had taken shape and life, Albinia stood by the fire in her sitting-room the next morning, trying to rally her judgment, and equally dreading the sight of those who had caused her grief, and of those who would share the shock she had last night experienced.

The first knock announced one whom she did not expect—Gilbert, wretchedly pale from a sleepless night, and his voice scarcely audible.

'I beg your pardon,' he said; 'but I thought I might have led you to be hard on Lucy; I do believe it was against her will.'

Before she could answer, the door flew wide, and in rushed Maurice, shouting, 'Good morning, mamma; and at his voice Mr. Kendal's dressing-room door was pushed back, and he called, 'Here, Maurice.'

As the boy ran forward, he was met and lifted to his father's breast, while, with a fervency he little understood, though he never forgot it, the words were uttered,

'God bless you, Maurice, and give you grace to go on to withstand temptation, and speak the truth from your heart!'

Maurice was impressed for a moment, then he recurred to his leading thought—

'May I have the cannon, papa? I did kick—I broke the bottle; but may I have the cannon?'

‘Maurice, you are too young to understand the value of your resistance. Listen to me, my boy, for you must never forget this: you have been taken among persons who, I trust, will never be your companions.’

‘Oh!’ interrupted Maurice, ‘must I never be a jockey?’

‘No, Maurice. Horses are perverted to bad purposes by thoughtless men, and you must keep aloof from such. You were not to blame, for you refused to do what you knew to be wrong, and did not know it was an improper place for you.’

‘Gilbert took me,’ said Maurice, puzzled at the gravity, which convinced him that some one was in fault, and of course it must be himself.

‘Gilbert did very wrong,’ said Mr. Kendal; ‘and henceforth you must learn that you must trust to your own conscience, and no longer believe that all your brother tells you is right.’

Maurice gazed in inquiry, and perceiving his brother’s downcast air, ran to his mother, crying, ‘Is papa angry?’

‘Yes,’ said Gilbert, willing to spare her the pain of a reply, ‘he is justly angry with me for having exposed you to temptation. Oh, Maurice, if I had been made such as you, it would have been better for us all!’

It was the first perception that a grown person could do wrong, and that person his dear Gilbert. As if the grave countenances were insupportable, he gave a long-drawn breath, hid his face on his mother’s knee, and burst into an agony of weeping. He was lifted on her lap in a moment, father and mother both comforting him with assurances that he was a very good boy, and that papa was much pleased with him, Mr. Kendal even putting the cannon into his hand, as a tangible evidence of favour; but the child thrust aside the toy, and sliding down, took hold of his brother’s languid, dejected hand, and cried, with a sob and stamp of his foot,

‘You sha’n’t say you are naughty, I won’t let you!’

Alas! it was a vain repulsion of the truth that this is a wicked world. Gilbert only put him back, saying,

‘You had better go away from me, Maurice: you

cannot understand what I have done. Pray Heaven you may never know what I feel !'

Maurice did but cling the tighter ; and though Mr. Kendal had not yet addressed the culprit, he respected the force of that innocent love too much to interfere. The bell rang, and they went down, Maurice still holding by his brother ; and when his uncle met them, it was touching to see the generous little fellow hanging back, and not giving his own hand till he had seen Gilbert receive the ordinary greeting.

Though Mr. Ferrars had been told nothing, he could not but be aware of the symptoms of a family crisis—the gravity of some, and the pale, jaded looks of others. Lucy was not one of these ; she came down with little Albinia in her arms, and began to talk rather airily, excusing herself for not having come down in the evening because that 'horrid ink' had got into her hair, and titling a little over the absurdity of *her* having picked up the inkstand in the dark. Not a word of response did she meet, and her gaiety died away in vague alarm. Sophy, the most innocent, looked wretched ; and Maurice absolutely began to cry again, at the failure of some manoeuvre to make his father speak to Gilbert.

His tears broke up the breakfast-party. His mother led him away to reason with him, that, sad as it was, it was better that people should be grieved when they had transgressed, as the only hope of their forgiveness and improvement. Maurice wanted her to reverse the declaration that Gilbert had done wrong ; but, alas ! this could not be, and she was obliged to send him out with his little sister, hoping that he would work off his grief by exercise. It was mournful to see the first shadow of the penalty of sin falling on the Eden of his childhood !

With an aching heart, she went in search of Lucy, who had taken sanctuary in Mrs. Meadows's room, and was not easily withdrawn from thence to a *tête-à-tête*. Fearful of falsehood, Albinia began to tell her she knew all, and how little she had expected such a requital of trust.

Lucy exclaimed that it had not been her fault, she had

always wanted to tell, and gradually Albinia drew from her the whole avowal, half shame-faced, half exultant.

She had never dreamt of meeting Algernon at Brighton—it was quite by chance that she came upon him at the officers' ball, when he was staying with Captain Greenaway. He asked her to dance, and she had said yes, all on a sudden, without thinking, and then she fancied he would go away; she begged him not to come again, but whenever she went out on the chain-pier before breakfast, there he was.

Why did she go thither? She hung her head. Mrs. Annesley had desired her to walk; she could not help it; she was afraid to write and tell what was going on—besides, he would come, though she told him she would not see him; and she could not bear to make him unhappy. Then, when she came home, she had been in hopes it was all over, but she had been very unhappy, and had been on the point of telling all about it many times, when mamma looked at her kindly; but then he came to the Vicarage, and he *would* wait for her at the bridge, and write notes to her, and she could not stop it; but she had always told him it was no use, she never would be engaged to him without papa's consent. She had only promised that she would not marry any one else, only because he was so very desperate, and she was afraid to break it off entirely, lest he should go and marry the Principessa Bianca, a foreigner and Papist, which would be so shocking for him and his uncle. Gilbert could testify how grieved she was to have any secrets from mamma; but Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy was so dreadful when she talked of telling, that she did not know what would happen.

When he went away, and she thought it was all over—mamma might recollect how hard it was for her to keep up, and what a force she put upon herself—but she would rather have pined to death than have said one word to bring him back, and was quite shocked when Gilbert gave her his note, to beg her to let him see her that evening, before the party returned; she said, with all her might, that he must not come, and when he did, she was

begging him all the time to go away, and she was so dreadfully frightened when they actually came, that she had all but gone into hysterics, or fainted away, and that was the way he came to throw the ink at her—she was so very much shocked, and so would he be—and really she felt the misfortune to the beautiful new sofa-cover as a most serious calamity and aggravation of her offence.

It was not easy to know how to answer; Albinia was scornful of the sofa-cover, and yet it was hard to lay hold of a tangible subject on which to show Lucy her error, except in the concealment, which, by her own showing, she had lamented the whole time. She had always said no, but, unluckily, her noes were of the kind that might easily be made to mean yes; and she evidently had been led on partly by her own heart, partly by the force of the stronger will, though her better principles had filled her with scruples and misgivings at every stage. She had been often on the point of telling all, and asking forgiveness; and here it painfully crossed Albinia, that if she herself had been less hurried, and less disposed to take everything for granted, a little tenderness might have led to a voluntary confession.

Still Lucy defended herself by the compulsion exercised on her, and she would hear none of the conclusions Albinia drew therefrom; she would not see that the man who drove her to a course of disobedience and subterfuge could be no fit guide, and fired up at a word of censure, declaring that she knew that mamma had always hated him, and that now he was absent, she would not hear him blamed. The one drop of true love made her difficult to deal with, for her heart was really made over to the tyrant, and Albinia did not feel herself sufficiently guiltless of negligence and imprudence to rebuke her with a comfortable conscience.

Mr. Kendal had been obliged to attend to some justice business—better for him, perhaps, than acting as domestic magistrate—and meanwhile the Vicar of Fairmead found himself forgotten. He wanted to be at home, yet did not like to leave his sister in unexplained trouble, though not sure whether he might not be better absent.

Time passed on, he finished the newspaper, and wrote letters, and then, seeing no one, he had gone into the hall to send for a conveyance, when Gilbert, coming in from the militia parade, became the recipient of his farewells, but apparently with so little comprehension, that he broke off, struck by the dejected countenance and wandering eye.

‘I beg your pardon,’ Gilbert said, passing his hand over his brow, ‘I did not hear.’

‘I was only asking you to tell my sister that I would not disturb her, and leaving my good-byes with you.’

‘You are not going!’

‘Thank you; I think my wife will grow anxious.’

‘I had hoped’—Gilbert sighed and paused—‘I had thought that perhaps—’

The wretchedness of his tone drove away Mr. Ferrars’s purpose of immediate departure, and returning to the drawing-room, he said, ‘If there were any way in which I could be of use.’

‘Then you do not know?’ said Gilbert, veiling his face with his hand, as he leant on the mantel-shelf.

‘I know nothing. I could only see that something was amiss. I was wishing to know whether my presence or absence would be best for you all.’

‘Oh! don’t go!’ cried Gilbert. ‘Nobody must go who can be any comfort to Mrs. Kendal.’

A few kind words drew forth the whole piteous history that lay so heavily on his heart. Reserves were all over now; and irregularly and incoherently he laid open his griefs and errors, his gradual absorption into the society with which he had once broken, and the inextricable complication of mischief in which he had been involved by his debt.

‘Yet,’ he said, ‘all the time I longed from my heart to do well. It was the very thing that led me into this scrape. I thought if the man applied to my father, as he threatened, that I should be suspected of having concealed this on purpose, and be sent to India, and I was so happy, and thought myself so safe here. I did believe that home and Mrs. Kendal would have sheltered me; but my des-

tiny must needs hunt me out here, and alienate even her !’

‘The way to find the Devil behind the Cross, is to cower beneath it in weak idolatry, instead of grasping it in courageous faith,’ said Mr. Ferrars. ‘Such faith would have made you trust yourself implicitly to your father. Then you would either have gone forth in humble acceptance of the punishment, or else have stayed at home, free, pardoned, and guarded ; but, as it was, no wonder temptation followed you, and you had no force to resist it.’

‘And so all is lost ! Even dear little Maurice can never be trusted to me again ! And his mother, who would, if she could, be still merciful and pitying as an angel, she cannot forget to what I exposed him ! She will never be the same to me again ! Yet I could lay down my life for any of them !’

Mr. Ferrars watched the drooping figure, crouching on his chairs, elbows on knees, head bowed on the supporting hands, and face hidden ; and, listening to the meek, affectionate hopelessness of the tone, he understood the fond love and compassion that had often surprised him in his sister, but he longed to read whether this were penitence towards God, or remorse towards man.

‘Miserable indeed, Gilbert,’ he said ; ‘but if all were irretrievably offended, there still is One who can abundantly pardon, where repentance is true.’

‘I thought’—cried Gilbert—‘I thought it had been true before ! If pain, and shame, and abhorrence could so render it, I know it was when I came home. And then it was comparative happiness ; I thought I was forgiven ; I found joy and peace where they are promised’—the burning tears dropped between his fingers—‘but it was all delusion ; not prayers nor sacraments can shield me—I am doomed, and all I ask is to be out of the way of ruining Maurice !’

‘This is mere despair,’ said Mr. Ferrars. ‘I cannot but believe your contrition was sincere ; but steadfast courage was what you needed, and you failed in the one trial that may have been sent you to strengthen and prove

you. The effects have been terrible, but there is every hope that you may retrieve your error, and win back the sense of forgiveness.'

'If I could dare to hope so—but I cannot presume to take home to myself those assurances, when I know that I only resolve, that I may have resolutions to break.'

'Have you ever laid all this personally before Mr. Dusautoy?'

'No; I have thought of it, but, mixed up as this is with his nephew and my sister, it is impossible! But you are a clergyman, Mr. Ferrars!' he added, eagerly.

Mr. Ferrars thought, and then said,

'If you wish it, Gilbert, I will gladly do what I can for you. I believe that I may rightly do so.'

His face gleamed for a moment with the light of grateful gladness, as if at the first ray of comfort, and then he said, 'I am sure none was ever more grieved and wearied with the burden of sin—if that be all.'

'I think,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'that it might be better to give time to collect yourself, examine the past, separate the sorrow for the sin from the disgrace of the consequences, and then look earnestly at the sole ground of hope. How would it be to come for a couple of nights to Fairmead, at the end of next week?'

Gilbert gratefully caught at the invitation; and Mr. Ferrars gave him some advice as to his reading and self-discipline, speaking to him as gently and tenderly as Albinia herself. Both lingered in case the other should have more to say; but at last Gilbert stood up, saying,

'I would thankfully go to Calcutta now, but the situation is filled up, and my father said John Kendal had been enough trifled with. If I saw any fresh opening, where I should be safe from hurting Maurice!'

'There is no reason you and your brother should not be a blessing to each other.'

'Yes, there is. Till I lived at home, I did not know how impossible it is to keep clear of old acquaintance. They are good-natured fellows—that Tritton and the like—and after all that has come and gone, one would be a brute to cut them entirely; and Maurice is always after

me, and has been more about with them than his mother knows. Even if I were very different, I should be a link ; and though it might be no great harm if Maurice were a tame mamma's boy—you see, being the fellow he is, up to anything for a lark, and frantic about horses—I could never keep him from them. There's no such great harm in themselves—hearty, good-natured fellows they are—but there's a worse lot that they meet, and Maurice will go all lengths whenever he begins. Now, so little as he is now, if I were once gone, he would never run into their way, and they would never get hold of him.'

Mr. Ferrars had unconsciously screwed up his face with dismay, but he relaxed it, and spoke kindly.

'You are right. It was a mistake to stay at home. Perhaps your regiment may be stationed elsewhere.'

'I don't know how long it may be called out. If it were but possible to make a fresh beginning.'

'Did you hear of my brother's suggestion ?'

'I wish—but it is useless to talk about that. I could not presume to ask my father for a commission—Heaven knows when I shall dare to speak to him !'

'You have not personally asked his pardon after full confession.'

'N-o—Mrs. Kendal knows all.'

'Did you ever do such a thing in your life ?'

'You don't know what my father is.'

'Neither do you, Gilbert. Let that be the first token of sincerity.'

Without leaving space for another word, Mr. Ferrars went through the conservatory into the garden, where, meeting the children, he took the little one in his arms, and sent Maurice to fetch his mamma. Albinia came down, looking so much heated and harassed, that he was grieved to leave her.

'Oh, Maurice, I am sorry ! You always come in for some catastrophe,' she said, trying to smile. 'You have had a most forlorn morning.'

'Gilbert has been with me,' he said. 'He has told me all, my dear, and I think it hopeful : I like him better than I ever did before.'

'Poor feather, the breath of your lips has blown him the other way,' said Albinia, too unhappy for consolation.

'Well, it seems to me that you have done more for him than I ever quite believed. I did not expect such sound, genuine religious feeling.'

'He always had plenty of religious sentiment,' said Albinia, sadly.

'I have asked him to come to us next week. Will you tell Edmund so?'

'Yes. He will be thankful to you for taking him in hand. Poor boy, I know how attractive his penitence is, but I have quite left off building on it.'

Mr. Ferrars defended him no longer. He could not help being much moved by the youth's self-abasement, but that might be only because it was new to him, and he did not even try to recommend him to her mercy; he knew her own heart might be trusted to relent, and it would not hurt Gilbert in the end to be made to feel the full weight of his offence.

'I must go,' he said, 'though I am sorry to leave you in perplexity. I am afraid I can do nothing for you.'

'Nothing—but feel kindly to Gilbert,' said Albinia. 'I can't do so yet. I don't feel as if I ever could again, when I think what he was doing with Maurice. Yes, and how easily he could have brought poor Lucy to her senses, if he had been good for anything! Oh! Maurice, this is sickening work! You should be grateful to me for not scolding you for having taken me from home!'

'I do not repent,' said her brother. 'The explosion is better than the subterranean mining.'

'It may be,' said Albinia; 'and I need not boast of the good I did at home! My poor, poor Lucy! A little discreet kindness and watchfulness on my part would have made all the difference! It was all my running my own way with my eyes shut; but then, I had always lived with trustworthy people. Well, I won't keep you listening to my maundering, when Winifred wants you. Oh! why did that Polysyllable ever come near the place?'

Mr. Ferrars said the kindest and most cheering things he could devise, and drove away, not much afraid of her being unforgiving.

He was disposed to stake all his hopes of the young man on the issue of his advice to make a direct avowal to his father. And Gilbert made the effort, though rather in desperation than resolution, knowing that his condition could not be worse, and seeing no hope save in Mr. Ferrars' counsel. He was the first to seek Mr. Kendal, and dreadful to him as was the unaltering melancholy displeasure of the fixed look, the steadily penetrating deep dark eyes, and the subdued sternness of the voice, he made his confession fully, without reserve or palliation.

It was more than Mr. Kendal had expected, and more, perhaps, than he absolutely trusted, for Gilbert had not hitherto inspired faith in his protestations that he spoke the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, nor had he always the power of doing so when overpowered by fright. The manner in which his father laid hold of any inadvertent discrepancy, treating it as a wilful prevarication, was terror and agony; and well as he knew it to be the meed of past equivocation, he felt it cruel to torture him by implied suspicion. Yet how could it be otherwise, when he had been introducing his little brother to his own corrupters, and conniving at his sister's clandestine correspondence with a man whom he knew to be worthless?

The grave words that he obtained at last, scarcely amounted to pardon; they implied that he had done irreparable mischief, and acted disgracefully, and such forgiveness as was granted was only made conditional on there being no farther reserves.

Alas! even with all tender love and compassion, no earthly parent can forgive as does the Heavenly Father. None but the Omniscient can test the fulness of the confession, nor the sincerity of 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.' This interview only sent the son away more crushed and overwhelmed, and yearning towards the more deeply offended, and yet more compassionate Father.

Mr. Kendal, after this interview, so far relaxed his displeasure as to occasionally address Gilbert when they met at luncheon after this deplorable morning, while to-

wards Lucy he observed a complete silence. It was not at first that she perceived this, and even then it struck more deeply on Sophia than it did on her.

Mr. Kendal shrank from inflicting pain on the good vicar, and it was decided that the wives should be the channel through which the information should be imparted. Albinia took the children, sending them to play in the garden while she talked to Mrs. Dusautoy. She found that keen little lady had some shrewd suspicions, but had discovered nothing defined enough to act upon, and was relieved to have the matter opened at last.

As to the ink, no mortal could help laughing over it; even Albinia, who had been feeling as if she could never laugh again, was suddenly struck by the absurdity, and gave way to a paroxysm of merriment.

‘Properly managed, I do think it might put an end to the whole affair,’ said Mrs. Dusautoy. ‘He could not stand being laughed at.’

‘I am afraid he never will believe that he can be laughed at.’

‘Yes, that is unlucky,’ said Mrs. Dusautoy, gravely; but recollecting that she was not complimentary, she added, ‘You must not think we undervalue Lucy. John is very fond of her, and the only objection is, that it would require a person of more age and weight to deal with Algernon.’

‘Never mind speeches,’ sighed Albinia: ‘we know too well that nothing could be worse for either. Can’t you give him a tutor and send him to travel.’

‘I’ll talk to John; but unluckily he is of age next month, and there’s an end of our power. And John would never keep him away from hence, for he thinks it his only chance.’

‘I suppose we must do something with Lucy. Heigh-ho! People used not to be always falling in love in my time, except Fred, and that was in a rational way; that could be got rid of!’

The effect of the intelligence on the vicar was to make him set out at once to the livery-stables in quest of his nephew, but he found that the young gentleman had that

morning started for London, whither he proposed to follow him on the Monday. Lucy cried incessantly, in the fear that the gentle-hearted Vicar might have some truculent intentions towards his nephew, and was so languid and unhappy that no one had the heart to scold her; and comforting her was still more impossible.

Mr. Kendal used to stride away from the sight of her swollen eyes, and ask Albinia why she did not tell her that the only good thing that could happen to her would be, that she should never see nor hear of the fellow again.

Why did he not tell her so himself was a different question.

CHAPTER XXIV.

‘WELL, Albinia,’ said Mr. Kendal, after seeing Mr. Dusautoy on his return from London.

There was such a look of deprecation about him, that she exclaimed, ‘One would really think you had been accepting this charming son-in-law.’

‘Suppose I had,’ he said, rather quaintly; then, as he saw her hands held up ‘conditionally, you understand, entirely conditionally. What could I do, when Dusautoy entreated me, with tears in his eyes, not to deprive him of the only chance of saving his nephew?’

‘Umph,’ was the most innocent sound Albinia could persuade herself to make.

‘Besides,’ continued Mr. Kendal, ‘it will be better to have the affair open and avowed than to have all this secret plotting going on without being able to prevent it. I can always withhold my consent if he should not improve, and Dusautoy declares nothing would be such an incentive.’

‘May it prove so!’

‘You see,’ he pursued, ‘as his uncle says, nothing can be worse than driving him to these resorts, and when he is once of age, there’s an end of all power over him to

hinder his running straight to ruin. Now, when he is living at the Vicarage, we shall have far more opportunity of knowing how he is going on, and putting a check on their intercourse, if he be unsatisfactory.'

'If we can.'

'After all, the young man has done nothing that need blight his future life. He has had great disadvantages, and his steady attachment is much in his favour. His uncle tells me he promises to become all that we could wish, and, in that case, I do not see that I have the right to refuse the offer, when things have gone so far—conditionally, of course.' He dwelt on that saving clause like a salve for his misgivings.

'And what is to become of Gilbert and Maurice, with him always about the house?' exclaimed Albinia.

'We will take care he is not too much here. He will soon be at Oxford. Indeed, my dear, I am sorry you disapprove. I should have been as glad to avoid the connexion as you could be, but I do not think I had any alternative, when Mr. Dusautoy pressed me so warmly, and only asked that he should be taken on probation; and besides, when poor Lucy's affections are so decidedly involved.'

Albinia perceived that there had been temper in her tone, and could object no further, since it was too late; and as she could not believe that her husband had been weak, she endeavoured to acquiesce in his reasoning, and it was a strong argument that they should see Lucy bright again.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that you would prefer that I should announce my decision to her myself?'

It was a more welcome task than spreading gloom over her countenance, but she entered in great trepidation, prepared to sink under some stern mandate; and there was nothing at first to undeceive her, for her father was resolved to atone for his concession by sparing her no preliminary thunders; and began by depicting her indiscretion and deceit, as well as the folly of attaching herself to a man without other recommendations than figure and fortune.

How much Lucy heard was uncertain ; she leant on a chair with drooping head and averted face, trembling, and suppressing a sob, apparently too much frightened to attend. Just when the exordium was over, and 'Therefore I lay my commands on you' might have been expected, it turned into, 'However, upon Mr. Dusautoy's kind representation, I have resolved to give the young man a trial, and provided he convinces me by his conduct that I may safely entrust your happiness to him, I have told his uncle that I will not withhold my sanction.'

With a shriek of irrepressible feeling, Lucy looked from father to mother, and clasped her hands, unable to trust her ears.

'Yes, Lucy,' said Albinia, 'your father consents, on condition that nothing further happens to excite his doubts of Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy. It rests with yourself now ; it is not too late. After all that has passed, you would incur much deserved censure if you put an end to the affair ; but even that would be better, far better, than entering into an engagement with a man without sound principle.'

'Your mother is quite right, Lucy,' said Mr. Kendal. 'This is the only time. Gratified vanity has led you too far, and you have acted as I hoped no child of mine would ever act, but you have not forfeited our tenderest care. You are not engaged to this man, and no word of yours would be broken. If you hesitate to commit yourself to him, you have only to speak, and we would gladly at once do everything that could conduce to make you happy.'

'You don't want me to give him up!' cried Lucy. 'Oh! mamma, did not he say he had consented?'

'I said it rested with yourself, Lucy. Do not answer me now. Come to me at six o'clock, and tell me, after full reflection, whether I am to consider you as ready to pledge yourself to this young man.'

It was all that could be done. Albinia had a dim hope that the sense of responsibility, and dread of that hard will and selfish temper, might so rise upon Lucy as to startle her ; but then, as Mr. Kendal observed, if she

should decide against him, she would have used him so extremely ill, that they should feel nothing but shame.

‘Yes,’ said Albinia; ‘but it would be better to be ashamed of a girl’s folly, than to see her made miserable for life. Poor Lucy! if she decide against him, she will become a woman at once; if not, I’m afraid it will be the prediction about Marie Antoinette over again—very gay, and coming right through trial.’

They were obliged to tell Sophy of the state of things. She stood up straight, and said, slowly and clearly, ‘I do not like the world at all.’

‘I don’t quite see what you mean.’

‘Every one does what can’t be helped, and it is not *the* thing.’

‘Explain yourself, Sophy,’ said her father, amused.

‘I don’t think Lucy ought to be making the decision at all,’ said Sophy. ‘She did that long ago, when first she attended to what he said to her. If she does not take him now, it will be swearing to her neighbour, and disappointing him, because it is to her own hindrance.’

‘Yes, Sophy; but I believe it is better to incur the sin of breaking a promise, than to go on when the fulfilment involves not only suffering, but mischief. Lucy has repeatedly declared there was no engagement.’

‘I know it could not be helped; but Mr. Dusautoy ought not to have asked papa.’

‘Nor papa to have consented, my Suleiman ben Daood,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘Ah! Sophy, we all have very clear, straightforward views at eighteen of what other people ought to do.’

‘Papa—I never meant—I did not think I was saying anything wrong. I only said I did not like the world.’

‘And I heartily agree with you, Sophy; and if I had lived in it as short a time as you have, perhaps “considerations” would not affect my judgment.’

‘I am always telling Sophy she will be more merciful as she grows older,’ said Albinia.

‘If it were only being more merciful, it would be very well,’ said Mr. Kendal; ‘but one also becomes less thorough-going, because practice is more painful than

theory, and one remembers consequences that have made themselves felt. It is just as well that there should be young people to put us in mind what our flights once were.'

Albinia and Sophy left Lucy to herself; they both wished to avoid the useless 'What shall I do?' and they thought that, driven back on her own resources, even *her* own mind might give her better counsel than the seven watchmen aloft in a high tower.

She came down looking exceedingly pale. Mr. Kendal regarded her anxiously, and held his hand out to her kindly.

'Papa,' she said, simply, 'I can't give it up. I do love him.'

'Very well, my dear,' he answered, 'there is no more to be said than that I trust he will merit your affection and make you happy.'

Good Mr. Dusautoy was as happy as a king; he took Lucy in his arms, and kissed her as if she had been his child, and with her hands folded in his own, he told her how she was to teach his dear Algernon to be everything that was good, and to lead him right by her influence. She answered with caresses and promises, and whoever had watched her eye, would have seen in it a happy day-dream of Algernon's perfection, and his uncle thanking her for it.

She had expected that grandmamma would have been very happy; but marriage had, with the poor old lady, led to so much separation, that her weakened faculties took the alarm, and she received the tidings by crying bitterly, and declaring that every one was going away and leaving her. Lucy assured her over and over again that she was never going to desert her; and as Mr. Kendal had made it a condition that Algernon should finish his Oxford career respectably, there was little chance that poor Mrs. Meadows would survive until the marriage.

All along Gilbert made no remark. Though he had been left out of the family conclaves, and his opinion not asked, he submitted with the utmost meekness, as one who knew that he had forfeited all right to be treated as

son and heir. The more he was concerned at the engagement, the greater stigma he would place on his own connivance ; so he said nothing, and only devoted himself to his grandmother, as though the attendance upon her were a refuge and relief. More gentle and patient than ever, he soothed her fretfulness, invented pleasures for her, and rendered her so placid and contented, that her health began to improve.

Not for a moment did he seem to forget his error ; and Albinia's resolution to separate Maurice from him, could not hold when he himself silently assumed the mournful necessity, and put the child from him when clamorous for rides, till there was an appeal to papa and mamma. Mr. Kendal gave one look of inquiry at Albinia, and she began some matter-of-course about Gilbert being so kind—whereupon the brothers were together as before. When Albinia visited her little boy at night, she found that Gilbert had been talking to him of his eldest brother, and she heard more of Edmund's habits and tastes from the little fellow who had never seen him, than from either the twin-brother or the sister who had loved him so devotedly. It was as if Gilbert knew that he could be doing Maurice no harm when leading him to think of Edmund, and perhaps he felt some intrinsic resemblance in the deep loving strength of the two natures.

The invitation to Fairmead spared him the pain and shame of Algernon Dusautoy's first reception as Lucy's accepted lover. He went early on Saturday morning, and young Dusautoy, arriving in the evening, was first ushered into the library ; while Albinia did her best to soothe the excited nerves and fluttering spirits of Lucy, who was exceedingly ashamed to meet him again under the eyes of others, after such a course of stolen interviews, and what she had been told of her influence doing him good only alarmed her the more.

Well she might, for if ever character resembled that of the iron pot borne down the stream in company with the earthen one, it was the object of her choice. Poor pipkin that Gilbert was, the contact had cost him a smashing blow, and for all clay of the more fragile mould,

the best hope was to give the invulnerable material a wide berth. Talk of influence! Mr. Dusantoy might as well hope that a Wedgewood cream-jug would guide a copper cauldron and keep verdigris aloof.

His attraction for Lucy had always been a mystery to her family, who perhaps hardly did justice to the magnetism of mere force of purpose. Better training might have ennobled into resolution that which was now doggedness and obstinacy, and even in that shape, the real element of strength had a tendency to work upon softer natures. Thus it had acted in different ways with the Vicar, with Gilbert, and with Lucy; each had fallen under the power of his determination, with more or less of their own consent, and with Lucy the surrender was complete; she no sooner sat beside Algernon than she was completely his possession, and his complacent self-satisfaction was reflected on her face in a manner that told her parents that she was their own no longer, but given up to a stronger master.

Albinia liked neither to see nor to think about it, and kept aloof as much as she could, dividing herself between grandmamma and the children. On Tuesday morning, during Maurice's lessons, there was a knock at the sitting-room door. She expected Gilbert, but was delighted to see her brother.

'I thought you were much too busy to come near us?'

'So I am; I can't stay; so if Kendal be not forthcoming you must give this fellow a holiday.'

'He is gone to Hadminster, so—'

'Where's Gilbert?' broke in little Maurice.

'He went to his room to dress to go up to parade,' said Mr. Ferrars, and off rushed the boy without waiting for permission.

Albinia sighed, and said, 'It is a perfect passion.'

'Don't mourn over it. Love is too good a thing to be lamented over, and this may turn into a blessing.'

'I used to be proud of it.'

'So you shall be still. I am very much pleased with that poor lad.'

She would not raise her eyes; she was weary of hoping

for Gilbert, and his last offence had touched her where she had never been touched before.

‘Whatever faults he has,’ Mr. Ferrars said, ‘I am much mistaken if his humility, love, and contrition be not genuine; and what more can the best have?’

‘Sincerity!’ said Albinia, hopelessly. ‘There’s no truth in him.’

‘You should discriminate between deliberate self-interested deception, and failure in truth for want of moral courage. Both are bad enough, but the latter is not “loving a lie,” not such a ruinous taint and evidence of corruption as the former.’

‘It is curious to hear you repeating my old excuses for him,’ said Albinia, ‘now that he has cast his glamour over you.’

‘Not wrongly,’ said her brother. ‘He is in earnest; there is no acting about him.’

‘Yes, that I believe; I know he loves us with all his heart, poor boy, especially Maurice and me, and I think he had rather go right than wrong, if he could only be let alone. But, oh! it is all “unstable as water.” Am I unkind, Maurice? I know how it would be if I let him talk to me for ten minutes, or look at me with those pleading brown eyes of his!’

Mr. Ferrars knew it well, and why she was steeled against him; but he put this aside, saying that he was come to speak of the future, not of the past, and that he wanted Edmund to reconsider William’s advice. He told her what Gilbert had said of the difficulty of breaking off old connexions, and the danger to Maurice from his acquaintance. An exchange into another corps of militia might be for the worse, the occupation was uncertain, and Mr. Ferrars believed that a higher position, companions of a better stamp, and the protection of a man of lively manners, quick sympathy, and sound principle, like their cousin Fred, might be the opening of a new life. He had found Gilbert most desirous of such a step, regarding it as his only hope; but thinking it so offensively presumptuous to propose it to his father under present circumstances, his Oxford terms thrown away, and himself disgraced both there and at

home, that the matter would hardly have been brought forward had not Mr. Ferrars undertaken to press it, under the strong conviction that remaining at home would be destruction, above all, with young Dusautoy making part of the family.

‘I declare,’ said Mr. Ferrars, ‘he looked so much at home in the drawing-room and welcomed Gilbert with such an air of patronage, that I could have found it in my heart to have knocked him down!’

It was a treat to hear Maurice speak so unguardedly, and Albinia laughed, and asked whether he thought it very wrong to hope that the Polysyllable would yet do something flagrant enough to open Lucy’s eyes.

‘I’ll allow you to hope that *if* he should, her eyes *may* be opened,’ said Maurice.

Albinia began a vehement vindication for their having tolerated the engagement, in the midst of which her brother was obliged to depart, amused at her betrayal of her own sentiments by warfare against what he had never said.

She had treated his counsel as chimerical, but when she repeated it to her husband, she thought better of it, since, alas! it had become her great object to part those two loving brothers. Mr. Kendal first asked where the 25th Lancers were, then spoke of expense, and inquired what she knew of the cost of commissions, and of her cousin’s means. All she could answer for was, that Fred’s portion was much smaller than Gilbert’s inheritance, but at least she knew how to learn what was wanted, and if her friends, the old Generals, were to be trusted, she ought to have no lack of interest at the Horse Guards.

Gilbert was taken into counsel, and showed so much right spirit and good sense, that the discussion was friendly and unreserved. It ended in the father and son resorting to Pettilove’s office to ascertain the amount of ready money in his hands, and what income Gilbert would receive on coming of age. The investigation somewhat disappointed the youth, who had never thoroughly credited what his father told him of the necessity of his ex-

erting himself for his own maintenance, nor understood how heavy a drain on his property were the life-interests of his father and grandmother, and the settlement on his aunt. By-and-by, he might be comparatively a rich man, but at first his present allowance would be little more than doubled, and the receipts would be considerably diminished by an alteration of existing system of rents, such as had so long been planned. It was plain that the almshouses were the unsubstantial fabric of a dream; but no one now dared to refer to them, and Mr. Kendal desired Albinia to write to consult her cousin.

Captain Ferrars was so much flattered at her asking his protection for anything, that he would have promised to patronize Cousin Slender himself for her sake. He praised the Colonel and lauded the mess to the skies, and economy being his present hobby, he represented himself as living upon nothing, and saving his pay. He further gave notice of impending retirements, and advised that the application should be made without loss of time, lamenting grievously himself that there was no chance for the 25th, of a touch at the Russians.

Something in his letter put every one into a hurry, and a correspondence began, which resulted in Gilbert's being summoned to Sandhurst for an examination, which he passed creditably. The purchase-money was deposited, and the household was daily thrown into a state of excitement by the arrival of official-looking envelopes, which turned out to contain solicitations from tailors and outfitters, bordered with portraits of camp-beds and portable baths, until, at last, when the real document appeared, Gilbert tossed it aside as from 'another tailor:' but Albinia knew the article too well to mistake it, and when the long blue cover was opened, it proved to convey more than they had reckoned upon.

Gilbert Kendal held a commission in the 25th Lancers, and the corps was under immediate orders for the East. The number of officers being deficient, he was to join the head-quarters at Cork, without going to the dépôt, and would thence sail with a stated minimum of baggage.

Albinia could not look up. She knew her husband had not intended thus to risk the last of his eldest-born sons ; and though her soldier-spirit might have swelled with exultation had her own brave boy been concerned, she dreaded the sight of quailing or dismay in Gilbert.

‘ Going really to fight the Russians,’ shouted Maurice, as the meaning reached him. ‘ Oh ! Gibbie, if I was but a man to go with you ! ’

‘ You will do your duty, my boy,’ said his father.

‘ By God’s help,’ was the reverent answer which emboldened Albinia to look up at him, as he stood with Maurice clinging by both hands to him. She had done him injustice, and her heart bounded at the sight of the flush on his cheek, the light in his eyes, and the expression on his lips, making his face finer and more manly than she had ever seen it ; as if the grave necessity, and the awe of the unseen glorious danger, were fixing and elevating his wandering purpose. To have no choice was a blessing to an infirm will, and to be inevitably out of his own power braced him and gave him rest. She held out her hand to him, and there was a grasp of inexpressible feeling, the first renewal of their old terms of sympathy and confidence.

There was no time to be lost ; Mr. Kendal would go to London with him by the last train that day, to fit him out as speedily as possible, before he started for Cork.

Every one felt dizzy, and there was no space for aught but action. Perhaps Albinia was glad of the hurry ; she could not talk to Gilbert till she had learnt to put faith in him, and she would rather do him substantial kindnesses than be made the sharer of feelings that had too often proved like the growth of the seed which found no depth of earth.

She ran about for him, worked for him, contrived for him, and gave him directions ; she could not, or would not, perceive his yearning for an effusion of penitent tenderness. He looked wistfully at her when he was setting out to take leave at the vicarage, but she had absorbed herself in flannel shirts, and would not meet his eye, nor did he venture to make the request that she would come with him.

Indeed, confidences there could be but few, for Maurice and Albinia hung on either side of him, so that he could hardly move, but he resisted all attempt to free him even from the little girl, who was hardly out of his arms for ten minutes together. It was only from her broken words that her mother understood that from the vicarage he had gone to the church. Poor little Albinia did not like it at all. 'Why was brother Edmund up in the church, and why did Gilbert cry?'

Maurice angrily enunciated, 'Men never cry,' but not a word of the visit to the church came from him.

Algernon Dusautoy had wisely absented himself, and the two sisters devoted themselves to the tasks in hand. Sophy worked as hard as did Mrs. Kendal, and spoke even less, and Lucy took care of Mrs. Meadows, whose nerves were painfully excited by the bustle in the house. It had been agreed that she should not hear of her grandson's intention till the last moment, and then he went in, putting on a cheerful manner, to bid her good-bye, only disclosing that he was going to London; but little as she could understand, there was an instinct about her that could not be deceived, and she began to cry helplessly and violently.

Mrs. Kendal and Lucy were summoned in haste; Gilbert lingered, trying to help them to restore her to composure. But time ran short; his father called him, and they hardly knew that they had received his last hurried embrace, nor that he was really gone, till they heard Maurice shouting like a Red Indian, as he careered about in the garden, his only resource against tears; and Sophy came in very still, very pale, and incapable of uttering a word or shedding a tear. Albinia was much concerned, for she could not bear to have sent him away without a more real adieu, and word of blessing and good augury; it made her feel herself truly unforgiving, and perhaps turned her heart back to him more fully and fondly than any exchange of sentiment would have done. But she had not much time to dwell on this omission, for poor Mrs. Meadows missed him sorely, and after two days' constant fretting after him, another paralytic stroke renewed the

immediate danger, so that by the time Mr. Kendal returned from London she was again hovering between life and death.

Mr. Kendal, to his great joy, met Frederick Ferrars at the 'Family Office.' The changes in the regiment had given him his majority, and he had flashed over from Ireland to make his preparations for the campaign. His counsel had been most valuable in Gilbert's equipment, especially in the knotty question of horses, and he had shown himself so amiable and rational that Mr. Kendal was quite delighted, and rejoiced in committing Gilbert to his care. He had assumed the trust in a paternal manner, and, infected by his brilliant happiness and hopefulness, Gilbert had gone off to Ireland in excellent spirits.

'Another thing conduced to cheer him,' said Mr. Kendal afterwards to his wife, with a tone that caused her to exclaim, 'You don't mean that he saw G  nevi  ve ?'

'You are right. We came upon her in Rivington's shop, while we were looking for the smallest Bible. I saw who it was chiefly by his change of colour, and I confess I kept out of the way. The whole did not last five minutes ; she had her pupils with her, and soon went away ; but he thanked me, and took heart from that moment. Poor boy, who would have thought the impression would have been so lasting !'

'Well, by the time he is a field-officer, even William will let him please himself,' said Albinia, lightly, because her heart was too full for her to speak seriously.

She tried, by a kind letter, to atone for the omitted farewell, and it seemed to cheer and delight Gilbert. He wrote from Cork as if he had imbibed fresh hope and enterprise from his new companions ; he liked them all, and could not say enough of the kindness of Major Ferrars. Everything went smoothly, and in the happiest frame he sailed from Cork, and was heard of again at Malta and Gallipoli, direfully sea-sick, but reviving to write most amusing long descriptive letters, and when he reached the camp at Varna, he reported as gratefully of General Ferrars as the General did kindly of him.

Those letters were the chief pleasures in a harassing

spring and summer. It was well that practice had trained Sophia in the qualities of a nurse, for Lucy was seldom available when Algernon Dusautoy was at home; she was sure to be riding with him, or sitting for her picture, or the good Vicar, afraid of her overworking herself, insisted on her spending the evening at the vicarage.

She yielded, but not with an easy conscience, to judge by her numerous apologies, and when Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy returned to Oxford, she devoted herself with great assiduity to the invalid. Her natural gifts were far more efficient than Sophy's laboriously-earned gentleness, and her wonderful talent for prattling about nothing had a revivifying influence, sparing much of the plaintive weariness which accompanied that mournful descent of life's hill.

Albinia had reckoned on a rational Lucy until the Oxford term should be over. She might have anticipated a failure in the responsions, (who, in connexion with the Polysyllable, could mention being plucked for the little-go?) but it was more than she did expect that his rejection would send him home in sullen resentment, resolved to punish Oxford by the withdrawal of his august name. He had been quizzed by the young, reprimanded by the old, plucked by the middle-aged, and he returned with his mouth full of sentences against blind, benighted bigotry, and the futility of classical study, and of declamations, as an injured orphan, against his uncle's disregard of the intentions of his dear deceased parent, in keeping him from Bonn, Jena, Heidelberg, or any other of the outlandish universities whose guttural names he showered on the meek Vicar's desponding head.

He was twenty-one, and could not be sent whither he would not go. His uncle's resource was Mr. Kendal, who strongly hoped that the link was about to snap, when, summoning the gentleman to the library, he gave him to understand that he should consider a refusal to resume his studies as tantamount to a dissolution of the engagement. A long speech ensued about dear mothers, amiable daughters, classics, languages, and foreign tours. That was all the account Mr. Kendal could give his wife

of the dialogue, and she could only infer that Algernon's harangue had sent him into such a fit of abstraction, that he really could not tell the drift of it. However, he was clear that he had himself given no alternative between returning to Oxford and resigning Lucy.

That same evening, Lucy, all blushes and tears, faltered out that she was very unwilling, she could not bear to leave them all, nor dear grandmamma, but dear Algernon had prevailed on her to say next August!

When indignant astonishment permitted Albinia to speak, she reminded Lucy that a respectable career at Oxford had been the condition.

'I know,' said Lucy; 'but dear Algernon convinced papa of the unreasonableness of such a stipulation under the circumstances.'

Albinia felt the ground cut away under her feet, and all she could attempt was a dry answer. 'We shall see what papa says; but you, Lucy, how can you think of marrying with your grandmamma in this state, and Gilbert in that camp of cholera—'

'I told Algernon it was not to be thought of,' said Lucy, her tears flowing fast. 'But I don't know what to do; no one can tell how long it may go on, and we have no right to trifle with his feelings.'

'If he had any feelings for you, he would not ask it.'

'No, mamma, indeed!' cried Lucy, earnestly; 'it was his feeling for me; he said I was looking quite languid and emaciated, and that he could not allow my—good looks and vivacity to be diminished by my attendance in a sick chamber. I told him never to mind, for it did not hurt me; but he said it was incumbent on him to take thought for me, and that he could not present me to his friends if I were not in full bloom of beauty; yes, indeed, he said so; and then he said it would be the right season for Italy.'

'It is impossible you can think of going so far away! Oh, Lucy! you should not have consented.'

'I could not help it,' said Lucy, sobbing. 'I could not bear to contradict him; but please, mamma, let papa settle it for me. I don't want to go away; I told him I

never would ; I told him I had promised never to leave dear grandmamma ; but you see he is so resolute, and he cannot bear to be without me. Oh ! do get him to put it off—only if he is angry and goes to Italy without me, I know I shall die !’

‘ We will take care of you, my dear. I am sure we shall be able to show him how impossible a gay wedding would be at present ; and I do not think he can press it,’ said Albinia, moved into soothing the present distress, and relieved to find that there was no heartlessness on Lucy’s side.

What a grand power is sheer obstinacy ! It has all the momentum of a stone, or cannon-ball, or any other object set in motion without inconvenient sensations to obstruct its course !

Algernon Dusautoy had decided on being married in August, and taking his obedient pupil-wife through a course of lectures on the continental galleries of art ; and his determined singleness of aim prevailed against the united objections and opposition of four people, each of double or quadruple his wisdom and weight.

His first great advantage was, that, as Albinia surmised, Mr. Kendal could not recal the finale of their interview, and having lost the thread of the rigmarole, did not know to what his silence had been supposed to assent. Next, Algernon conquered his uncle by representing Lucy as on the road to an atrophy, and persuading him that he should be much safer on the Continent with a wife than without one ; and though the two ladies were harder to deal with in themselves, they were obliged to stand by the decision of their lords. Above all, he made way by his sincere habit of taking for granted whatever he wished, and by his magnanimous oblivion of remonstrance and denial ; so that every day one party or the other found that assumed, as fixed in his favour, which had the day before been most strenuously refused.

‘ If you consented to this, I thought I could not refuse that.’

‘ I consent ! I told him it was the last thing I could think of.’

‘Well, I own I was surprised, but he told me you had readily come into his views.’

Such was the usual tenor of consultations between the authorities, until their marvel at themselves and each other came to a height when they found themselves preparing for the wedding on the very day originally chosen by Algernon.

Mr. Kendal’s letter to Gilbert was an absolute apology. Gilbert in Turkey was a very different person from Gilbert at Bayford, and had assumed in his father’s mind the natural rights of son and heir; he seemed happy and valued, and the heat of the climate, pestiferous to so many, seemed but to give his Indian constitution the vigour it needed. When his comrades were laid up, or going away for better air, much duty was falling on him, and he was doing it with hearty good-will and effectiveness. Already the rapid changes had made him a lieutenant, and he wrote in the highest spirits. Moreover, he had fallen in with Bryan O’More, and had been able to do him sundry kindnesses, the report of which brought Ulick to Willow Lawn in an overflow of gratitude.

It was a strange state of affairs there. Albinia was ashamed of the plea of ‘could not help it,’ and yet that was the only one to rest on; the adherence to promises alone gave a sense of duty, and when or how the promises had been given, was not clear.

Besides, no one could be certain even about poor Lucy’s present satisfaction; she sometimes seemed like a little bird fluttering under the fascination of a snake. She was evidently half afraid of Algernon, and would breathe more freely when he was not at hand; but then a restlessness would come on if he did not appear as soon as she expected, as if she dreaded having offended him. She had violent bursts of remorseful tears, and great outpourings of fondness towards every one at home, and she positively did look ill enough to justify Algernon in saying that the present condition of matters was hurtful to her. Still she could not endure a word that remotely tended towards advising her to break off the engagement, or even to retard the wedding, and her admiration of her intended was unabated.

Indeed, his affection could not be doubted; he liked her adoration of all his performances, and he regarded her with beneficent protection, as a piece of property; he made her magnificent presents, and conceded to her that the wedding tour should not be beyond Clifton, whence they would return to Willow Lawn, and judge ere deciding on going abroad.

He said that it would be '*de bon ton*' to have the marriage strictly private. Even he saw the incongruity of festivity alongside of that chamber of decay and death; and besides, he had conceived such a distaste to the Drury family, that he had signified to Lucy that they must not make part of the spectacle.

Albinia and Sophy thought this so impertinent, that they manfully fought the battles of the Drurys, but without prevailing; Albinia took her revenge, by observing that this being the case, it was impossible to ask her brother and little Mary, whose well-sounding names she knew Algernon ambitionated for the benefit of the county paper.

Always doing what was most contrary to the theories with which she started in life, Albinia found herself taking the middle course that she contemned. She was marrying her first-daughter with an aching, foreboding heart, unable either to approve or to prevent, and obliged to console and cheer just when she would have imagined herself insisting upon a rupture at all costs.

Sophy had said from the first that her sister could not go back. She expected her to be unhappy, and believed it the penalty of the wrongdoings in consenting to the clandestine correspondence; and treated her with melancholy kindness as a victim under sentence. She was very affectionate, but not at all consoling when Lucy was sad, and she was impatient and gloomy when the *trousseau*, or any of the privileges of a *fiancée* brought a renewal of gaiety and importance. A broken heart and ruined fortunes were the least of the consequences she augured, and she went about the house as if she had realized them both herself.

The wedding-day came, and grandmamma was torpid

and only half-conscious, so that all could venture to leave her. The bride was not allowed to see her, lest the agitation should overwhelm both ; for the poor girl was indeed looking like the victim her sister thought her, pale as death, with red rings round her extinguished eyes, and trembling from head to foot, the more at the apprehension that Algernon would think her a fright.

After all that lavender and sal-volatile could do for her, she was such a spectacle, that when her father came to fetch her he was shocked, and said, tenderly, 'Lucy, my child, this must not be. Say one word, and all shall be over, and you shall never hear a word of reproach.'

But Lucy only cast a frightened glance around, and rising up with the accents of perfect sincerity, said, 'No, papa ; I am quite ready ; I am quite happy. I was only silly.'

Her mind was evidently made up ; and it was past Albinia's divination whether her agitation were composed of fear of the future and remorse for the past, or whether it were mere love of home and hurry of spirits, exaggerated by belief that a bride ought to weep. Probably it was a compound of all, and the whole of her reply perfect truth, especially the final clause.

So they married her, poor child, very much as if they had been attending her to the block. Sophy's view of the case had infected them all beyond being dispelled by the stately complacency of the bridegroom, or the radiant joy and affection of his uncle.

They put her into a carriage, watched her away, and turned back to the task which she had left them, dreading the effects of her absence. She was missed, but less than they feared ; the faculties had become too feeble for such strong emotion as had followed Gilbert's departure ; and the void was chiefly perceptible by the plaintive and exacting clinging to Albinia, who had less and less time to herself and her children, and was somewhat uneasy as to the consequences as regarded Maurice. While Gilbert was at home, the child had been under some supervision ; but now his independent and unruly spirit was left almost uncontrolled, except by his own intermittent young con-

science; his father indulged him, and endured from him what would have been borne from no one else; and Sophy was his willing slave, unable to exact obedience, and never complaining, save under the most stringent necessity or sense of duty. He was too young for school, and there was nothing to be done but to go on, from day to day, in the trust that no harm could eventually ensue in consequence of so absolute a duty as the care of the sufferer; and that while the boy's truth and generosity were sound, though he might be a torment, his character might be all the stronger afterwards for that very indocility.

It was not satisfactory, and many mothers would have been miserable; but it was not in Albinia's nature to be miserable when her hands were full, and she was doing her best. She had heard her brother say that when good people gave their children sound principles and spoilt them, they gave the children the trouble of self-conquest instead of doing it for them. She had great faith in Maurice's undertaking this task in due time; and while she felt that she still had her hand on the rein, she must be content to leave it loose for a while.

Besides, when his father and sisters, and, least of all, herself, did not find him a plague, did it much matter if other people did?

CHAPTER XXV.

EXULTING peals rang out from the Bayford tower, and as Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy alighted from their carriage at Willow Lawn, the cry of the Vicar and of the assembled household was, 'Have you heard that Sebastopol is taken?'

'Any news of Gilbert?' was Lucy's demand.

'No; the cavalry were not landed, so he had nothing to do with it.'

'I say, uncle,' said Algernon, 'shall I send up a sovereign to those ringers?'

'Eh! poor fellows, they will be very glad of it, thank you; only I must take care they don't drink it up. I'm sure they must be tired enough; they've been at it ever since the telegraph came in!'

'There!' exclaimed Algernon; 'Barton must have telegraphed from the station when we set out!'

'You? Did you think the bells were ringing for you,' exclaimed his uncle, 'when there's a great battle won, and Sebastopol taken?'

'Telegraphs are always lies!' quoth Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy, tersely; 'I don't believe anything has happened at all!' and he re-pocketed the sovereign.

Meantime Lucy was in a rapture of embracing. She was spread out with stiff silk flounces and velvet mantle, so as to emulate her husband's importance, and her chains and bracelets clattered so much, that Mr. Kendal could not help saying, 'You should have taken lessons of your Ayah, to learn how to manage your bangles.'

'Oh! papa,' said she, with a newly-learned little laugh, 'I could not help it; Louise could not find room for them in my dressing-case.'

They were not, however, lost upon the whole of the family. Grandmamma's dim eyes lighted when she recognised her favourite granddaughter in such gorgeous array, and that any one should have come back again was so new and delightful, that it constantly recurred as a fresh surprise and pleasure.

All were glad to have her again—their own Lucy, as she still was, though somewhat of the grandiose style and self-consequence of her husband had overlaid the original nature. She was as good-natured and obliging as ever, and though beginning by conferring her favours as condescensions, she soon would forget that she was the great Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy, and quickly become the eager, helpful Lucy. She was in very good looks, and bright and happy, admiring Algernon, rejoicing to obey his behests, and enhancing his dignity and her own by her discourses upon his talents and importance. How far she

was at ease with him, Albinia sometimes doubted; there now and then was an air of greater freedom when he left the room, and some of her favourite old household avocations were tenderly resumed by stealth, as though she feared he might think them unworthy of his wife.

She gave her spare time to the invalid, who was revived by her presence as by a sunbeam; and Albinia, in her relief and gratitude, did her utmost to keep Algernon happy and contented. She resigned a room to him as an *atelier*, and let the little Awk be captured to have her likeness taken; she promoted the guitar and key-bugle, and abstained from resenting his strictures on her dinners.

Such a guest reduced Mr. Kendal to absolute silence, but she did not think he suffered much therefrom, and he was often relieved, for all the neighbourhood asked the young couple to dinner. Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy's toilette was as good as a play to the oldest and youngest inhabitants of the house; her little sister used to stand by the dressing-table with her small fingers straightened to sustain a column of rings threaded on them, and her arm weighed down with bracelets; and grandmamma's happiest moments were when she was raised up to contemplate the costly robes, jewelled neck, and garlanded head of her darling.

When it turned out that Sebastopol was anything but taken, Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy's incredulity was a precious confirmation of his esteem for his own sagacity, more especially as Ulick O'More and Maurice had worn out the little brass piece of ordnance in firing *feux de joie*.

'But,' said Maurice, 'papa always said it was not true. Now you only said so when you found the bells were ringing for that, and not for you.'

Maurice's observations were not always convenient. Algernon, with much pomp, had caused a horse to be led to the door, for which he had lately paid eighty guineas, and he was expatiating on its merits, when Maurice broke out, 'That's Macheath, the horse that Archie Tritton bought of Mr. Nugent's coachman for twenty pounds.'

'Hush, Maurice!' said his father, 'you know nothing of it;' and Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy pursued, 'It was bred at Lord Lewthorp's, and sold because it was too tall for its companion. Laing was on the point of sending it to Tattersall's, where he was secure of a hundred, but he was willing to oblige me, as we had had transactions before.'

'Papa!' cried Maurice, 'I know it is Macheath, for Mr. Tritton showed him to Gilbert and me, when he had just got him, and said he was a showy beast, but incurably lame, so he should get what he could for him from Laing. Now, James, isn't it?' he called to the servant who was sedulously turning away a grinning face, but just muttered, 'Same, sir.'

Mr. Kendal charitably looked the other way, and Algernon muttered some species of imprecation.

Thenceforth Maurice took every occasion of inquiring what had become of Macheath, whether Laing had refunded the price, and what had been done to him for telling stories.

If the boy began in innocence, he went on in mischief; he was just old enough to be a most aggravating compound of simplicity and malice. He was fully aware that Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy was held cheap by his own favourites, and had been partly the cause of his dear Gilbert's troubles; and his sharp wits and daring nature were excited to the utmost by the solemn irritation that he produced. Not only was it irresistibly droll to tease one so destitute of fun, but he had the strongest desire to see how angry it was possible to make the big brother-in-law, of whom every one seemed in awe.

First, he had recourse to the old term Polysyllable, and when Lucy remonstrated, he answered, 'I've a right to call my brother what I please.'

'You know how angry mamma would be to hear you.'

'Mamma calls him the Polysyllable herself,' said Maurice, looking full at his victim.

Lucy, who would have given the world to hinder this epithet from coming to her husband's knowledge, began

explaining something about Gilbert's nonsense, before he knew him, and how it had been long disused.

'That's not true,' Lucy, quoth the tormentor. 'I heard mamma tell Sophy herself this morning to write for some fishsauce, because she said that Polysyllable was so fanciful about his dinner.'

Lucy was ready to cry, and Algernon, endeavouring to recal his usual dignity, exclaimed, 'If Mrs. Kendal—I mean, Mrs. Kendal has it in her power to take liberties, but if I find you repeating such again, you little imp, it shall be at your risk.'

'What will you do with me?' asked the sturdy varlet.

'Dear Maurice, I hope you'll never know! Pray don't try!' cried Lucy; but if she had had any knowledge of character, she would have seen that she had only provoked the little Berserker's curiosity, and had made him determined on proving the undefined threat. So the unfortunate Algernon seldom descended the stairs without two childish faces being protruded from the balusters of the nursery-flight over-head, pursuing him with hissing whispers of 'Poly-syllable' and 'Polly-silly,' and if he ventured on indignant gestures, Maurice returned them with nutcracker grimaces and provoking assurances to his little sister that he could not hurt her.

Algernon could not complain without making himself ridiculous, and Albinia was too much engaged to keep watch over her son, so that the persecution daily became more intolerable, and barren indications of wrath were so diverting to the little monkey, that the presence of the heads of the family was the sole security from his tricks. Poor Lucy was the chief sufferer, unable to restrain her brother, and enduring the brunt of her husband's irritation, with the great disappointment of being unable to make him happy at her home, and fearing every day that he would fulfil his threat of not staying another week in the house with that intolerable child, for the sake of any one's grandmother.

Tidings came, however, that completely sobered Maurice, and made them unable to think of moving. It was

the first rumour of the charge of Balaklava, with the report that the 25th Lancers were cut to pieces. In spite of Algernon's reiteration that telegraphs were lies, all the household would have been glad to lose the sense of existence during the time of suspense. Albinia's heart was wrung as she thought of the cold hurried manner of the last farewell, and every look she cast at her husband's calm melancholy face, seemed to be asking pardon that his son was not safe in India.

Late that evening the maid came hurriedly in with a packet of papers. 'A telegraph, ma'am, come express from Hadminster.'

It was to Mrs. Kendal from one of her friends at the Horse Guards. She did not know how she found courage to turn her eyes on it, but her shriek was not of sorrow.

'Major the Honourable F. Ferrars, severely wounded—right arm amputated.'

'Lieutenant Gilbert Kendal, slightly wounded—contusion, rib broken.'

She saw the light of thankfulness break upon Mr. Kendal's face, and the next moment flew up to her boy's bedside. He started up, half asleep, but crying out, 'Mamma, where's Gibbie?'

'Safe, safe! Maurice dearest, safe; only slightly wounded! Oh, Maurice, God has been very good to us!'

He flung his arms round her neck, as she knelt beside his crib in the dark, and thus Mr. Kendal found the mother and son. As he bent to kiss them, Maurice exclaimed, with a sort of anger, 'Oh, mamma, why have I got a bullet in my throat?'

Albinia laughed a little hysterically, as if she had the like bullet.

'It was very kind of Lord H——,' fervently exclaimed Mr. Kendal; 'you must write to thank him, Albinia. Gilbert may be considered safe while he is laid up. Perhaps he may be sent home. What would you say to that, Maurice?'

'Oh! I wouldn't come home to lose the fun,' said Maurice. 'Oh, mamma, let me get up to tell Awkey,

and run up to Ulick! Gilbert will be the colonel when I'm a cornet! Oh! I must get up!

His outspoken childish joy seemed to relieve Albinia's swelling heart, too full for the expression of thankfulness, and the excitement was too much even for the boy, for he burst into passionate sobs when forbidden to get up and waken his little sister.

The sobering came in Mr. Kendal's mention of Fred. Albinia was obliged to ask what had happened to him, and was shocked at having overlooked so terrible a misfortune; but Maurice seemed to be quite satisfied. 'You know, mamma, it said they were cut to pieces. Can't they make him a wooden arm?' evidently thinking he could be repaired as easily as the creatures in his sister's Noah's Ark. Even Algernon showed a heartiness and fellow-feeling that seemed to make him more like one of the family. Moreover, he was so much elevated at the receipt of a telegraph direct from the fountain-head, that he rode about the next day over all the neighbourhood with the tidings, and comported himself as though he had private access to all Lord Raglan's secrets.

The unwonted emotion tamed Maurice for several days, and his behaviour was the better for his daily rides with papa to Hadminster, to forestall the second post. At last, on his return, his voice rang through the house. 'Mamma, where are you? The letter is come, and Gilbert shot two Russians, and saved cousin Fred!'

'I opened your letter, Albinia,' said Mr. Kendal; and as she took it from him, he said, 'Thank God, I never dared hope for such a day as this!'

He shut himself into the library, while Albinia was sharing with Sophy the precious letter, but with a moment's disappointment at finding it not from Gilbert, but from her brother William.

'Before you receive this,' he wrote, 'you will have heard of the affair of to-day, and that our two lads have come out of it better than some others. There are but nine officers living, and only four unhurt out of the 25th Lancers, and Fred's escape is entirely owing to your son.'

Then followed a brief narrative of the events of Bala-klava, that fatal charge so well described as '*magnifique mais pas la guerre*,' a history that seemed like a dream in connexion with the timid Gilbert. His individual story was thus:—He safely rode the 'half a league' forward, but when more than half way back, his horse was struck to the ground by a splinter of the same shell that overthrew Major Ferrars, at a few paces' distance from him. Quickly disengaging himself from his horse, Gilbert ran to assist his friend, and succeeded in extricating him from his horse, and supporting him through the remainder of the terrible space commanded by the batteries. Fred, unable to move without aid, and to whom each step was agony, had entreated Gilbert to relinquish his hold, and not peril himself for a life already past rescue; but Gilbert had not seemed to hear, and when several of the enemy came riding down on them, he had used his revolver with such effect, as to lay two of the number prostrate, and deter the rest from repeating the attack.

'All this I heard from Fred,' continued the General; 'he is in his usual spirits, and tells me that he feels quite jolly since his arm has been off, and he has been in his own bed, but I fear he has a good deal to suffer, for his right side is terribly lacerated, and I shall be glad when the next few days are over. He desires me to say with his love that the best turn you ever did him was putting young Kendal into the 25th. Tell your husband that I congratulate him on his son's conduct, and am afraid that his promotion without purchase is only too certain. Gilbert's only message was his love. Speaking seems to give him pain, and he is altogether more prostrated than so slight a wound accounts for; but when I saw him, he had just been told of the death of his colonel and several of his brother officers, among them young Wynne, who shared his tent; and he was completely overcome. There is, however, no cause for uneasiness; he had not even been aware that he was hurt, until he fainted while Fred was under the surgeon's hands, and was then found to have an ugly contusion of the chest, and a fracture of the uppermost rib on the left side. A few days' rest will set

all that to rights, and I expect to see him on horseback before we can ship poor Fred for Scutari. In the meantime they are both in Fred's tent, which is fairly comfortable.'

Albinia understood whence came Gilbert's heroism. He had charged at first, as he had hunted with Maurice, because there was no doing otherwise, and in the critical moment the warm heart had done the rest, and equalled constitutional courage: but then she saw the gentle tender spirit sinking under the slight injury, and far more at the suffering of his friend, the deadly havoc among his comrades, and his own share in the carnage. The General coolly mentioned the two enemies who had fallen by his pistol, and Maurice shouted about them as if they had been two rabbits, but she knew enough of Gilbert to be sure that what he might do in the exigency of self-defence, would shock and sicken him in recollection. Poor Fred! how little would she once have believed that his frightful wound could be a secondary matter with her, only enhancing her gratitude, on account of another.

That was a happy evening; Maurice was sent to ask Ulick to dinner, and at dessert drank the health of his soldier relatives, among whom Mr. Kendal with a smile at Ulick, included Bryan O'More.

In the universal good-will of her triumph, Albinia having read her precious letter to every one, resolved to let the Drurys hear it, before forwarding it to Fairmead. Lucy's neglect of that family was becoming flagrant, and Albinia was resolved to take her to make the call. Therefore, after promulgating her intentions too decidedly for Algernon to oppose them, she set out with Lucy in the most virtuous state of mind. Maurice was to ride out with his father, and Sophy was taking care of grand-mamma, so she made her expedition with an easy mind, and absolutely enjoyed the change of scenery.

The war had drawn every one nearer together, and Mrs. Drury was really anxious about Gilbert, and grateful for the intelligence. Nor did Lucy meet with anything unpleasant. Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy, in waist-deep flounces, a Paris bonnet, and her husband's dignity,

impressed her cousins, and whatever use they might make of their tongues, it was not till after she was gone.

As the carriage stopped at the door, Sophy came out with such a perturbed expression, as seemed to prelude fatal tidings; and Lucy was pausing to listen, when she was hastily summoned by her husband.

‘Oh! mamma, he has struck Maurice such a blow!’ cried Sophy.

‘Algernon? where’s Maurice? is he hurt?’

‘He is in the library with papa.’

She was there in a moment. Maurice sat on his father’s knee, listening to Pope’s Homer, leaning against him, with eye, cheek, and nose exceedingly swelled and reddened; but these were symptoms of which she had seen enough in past days not to be greatly terrified, even while she exclaimed aghast.

‘Aye!’ said Mr. Kendal, sternly. ‘What do you think of young Dusautoy’s handiwork?’

‘What could you have done to him, Maurice?’

‘I painted his image.’

‘The children got into the painting-room,’ said Mr. Kendal, ‘and did some mischief; Maurice ought to have known better, but that was no excuse for his violence. I do not know what would have been the consequence, if poor little Albinia’s screams had not alarmed me. I found Algernon striking him with his doubled fist.’

‘But I gave him a dig in the nose,’ cried Maurice, in exultation; ‘I pulled ever so much hair out of his whiskers. I had it just now.’

‘This sounds very sad,’ said Albinia, interrupting the search for the trophy. ‘What were you doing in the painting-room? You know you had no business there.’

‘Why, mamma, little Awk wanted me to look at the pictures that Lucy shows her. And then, don’t you know his image? the little white bare boy pulling the thorn out of his foot. Awkey said he was naughty not to have his clothes on, and so I thought it would be such fun to make a militia-man of him, and so the paints were all about, and so I gave him a red coat and black trousers.’

‘Oh, Maurice, Maurice, how could you?’

'I couldn't help it, mamma! I did so want to see what Algernon would do!'

'Well.'

'So he came up and caught us. And wasn't he in a jolly good rage? that's all. He stamped, and called me names, and got hold of me to shake me, but I know I kicked him well, and I had quite a handful out of his whisker; but you see poor little Awkey is only a girl, and couldn't help squalling, so papa came up.'

'And in time!' said Mr. Kendal; 'he reeled against me, almost stunned, and was hardly himself for some moments. His nose bled violently. That fellow's fist might knock down an ox.'

'But he didn't knock *me* down,' said Maurice. 'You told me he did not, papa.'

'That's all he thinks of!' said Mr. Kendal, in admiration. 'Not a cry nor a tear from first to last. I told Sophy to let me know when Bowles came.'

'For a black eye?' cried the hard-hearted mother, laughing. 'You should have seen what Maurice and Fred used to do to each other.'

'Oh, tell me, mamma,' cried Maurice, eagerly.

'Not now, master,' she said, not thinking his pugnacity in need of such respectable examples. 'It would be more to the purpose to ask Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy's pardon for such very bad behaviour.'

Mr. Kendal looked at her in indignant surprise. 'Ours is not the side for the apology,' he said. 'If Dusautoy has a spark of proper feeling, he must excuse himself for such a brutal assault.'

'I am afraid Maurice provoked it; I hope my little boy is sorry for having been so mischievous, and sees that he deserves—'

Mr. Kendal silenced her by an impatient gesture, and feeling that anything was better than the discussion before the boy, she tried to speak indifferently, and not succeeding, left the room, much annoyed that alarm and indignation had led the indulgent father to pet and coax the spirit that only wanted to be taken down, and as if her discipline had received its first real shock.

Mr. Kendal followed her upstairs, no less vexed. 'Albinia, this is absurd,' he said. 'I will not have the child punished, or made to ask pardon for being shamefully struck.'

'It was shameful enough,' said Albinia; 'but, after all, I can't wonder that Algernon was in a passion; Maurice did behave very ill, and it would be much better for him if you would not make him more impudent than he is already.'

'I did not expect you to take part against your own child, when he has been so severely maltreated,' said he, with such unreasonable displeasure, that almost thinking it play, she laughed and said, 'You are as bad as the mothers of the school-children, when they won't have them beaten.'

He gave a look as if loth to trust his ears, walked into the room, and shut the door. The thrill of horror came over her that this was the first quarrel. She had been saucy when he was serious, and had offended him. She sprang to the door, knocked and called, and was in agony at the moment's delay ere he returned, with his face still stern and set. Pleading and earnest she raised her eyes, and surrendered unconditionally. 'Dear Edmund, don't be vexed with me, I should not have said it.'

'Never mind,' he said affectionately; 'I do not wish to interfere with your authority, but it would be impossible to punish a child who has suffered so severely; and I neither choose that Dusautoy should be made to think himself the injured party, nor that Maurice should be put to the pain of apologizing for an offence, which the other party has taken on himself to cancel with interest.'

Albinia was too much demolished to recollect her two arguments, that pride on their side would only serve to make Algernon prouder, and that she did not believe that asking pardon would be so bitter a pill to Maurice as his father supposed. She could only feel thankful to have been forgiven for her own offence.

When they met at dinner, all were formal, Algernon stiff and haughty, ashamed, but too grand to betray himself; and Lucy restless and uneasy, her eyes looking as if

she had been crying. When Maurice came in at dessert, the fourth part of his countenance emulating the unlucky cast in gorgeous hues of crimson and violet, Algernon was startled, and turning to Albinia, muttered something about 'never having intended,' and 'having had no idea.'

He might have said more, if Mr. Kendal, with Maurice on his knee, had not looked as if he expected it; and that look sealed Albinia's lips against expressing regret for the provocation; but Maurice exclaimed, 'Never mind, Algernon, it was all fair, and it doesn't hurt now. I wouldn't have touched your image, but that I wanted to know what you would do to me. Shake hands; people always do when they've had a good mill.'

Mr. Kendal looked across the table to his wife in a state of unbounded exultation in his generous boy, and Albinia felt infinitely relieved and grateful. Mr. Cavendish Dusaotoy took the firm young paw, and said with an attempt at condescension, 'Very well, Maurice, the subject shall be mentioned no more, since you have received a severer lesson than I intended, and appear sensible of your error.'

'It wasn't you that made me so,' began Maurice, with defiant eye; but with a strong sense of 'let well alone,' his father cut him short with, 'That's enough, my man, you've said all that can be wished,' lifted him again on his knee, and stopped his mouth with almonds and raisins.

The subject was mentioned no more; Lucy considered peace as proclaimed, and herself relieved from the necessity of such an unprecedented deed as preferring an accusation against Maurice; and Albinia, unaware of the previous persecution, did not trace that Maurice considered himself as challenged to prove, that experience of his brother-in-law's fist did not suffice to make him cease from his 'fun.'

Two days after, Algernon was coming in from riding, when a simple voice upon the stairs observed, 'Here's such a pretty picture!'

'Eh! what?' said Algernon; and Maurice held it near to him as he stood taking off his great coat.

'Such a pretty picture, but you mustn't have it! No, it is Ulick's.'

'Heavens and earth!' thundered Algernon, as he gathered up the meaning. 'Who has dared—? Give it me—or—' and as soon as he was freed from the sleeves, he snatched at the paper, but the boy had already sprung up to the first landing, and waving his treasure, shouted, 'No, it's not for you; I'll not give you Ulick's picture.'

'Ulick!' cried Algernon, in redoubled fury. 'You're put up to this! Give it me this instant, or it shall be the worse for you;' but ere he could stride up the first flight, Maurice's last leg was disappearing round the corner above, and the next moment the exhibition was repeated overhead in the gallery. Thither did Algernon rush headlong, following the scampering pattering feet, till the door of Maurice's little room was slammed in his face. Bursting it open, he found the chamber empty, but there was a shout of elvish laughter outside, and a cry of dismay coming up from the garden, impelled him to mount the rickety deal-table below the deep sunk dormer window, when thrusting out his head and shoulders, he beheld his wife and her parents gazing up in terror from the lawn. No wonder, for there was a narrow ledge of leading without, upon which Maurice had suddenly appeared, running with unwavering steps, till in a moment he stooped down, and popped through the similar window of Gilbert's room.

While still too dizzy with horror to feel secure that the child was indeed safe within, those below were startled by a frantic shout from Algernon: 'Let me out! I say, the imp has locked me in! Let me out!'

Albinia flew into the house and upstairs. Maurice was flourishing the key, and executing a war-dance before the captive's door, with a chant alternating of war-whoops, 'Promise not to hurt it, and I'll let you out!' and 'Pity poor prisoners in a foreign land!'

She called to him to desist, but he was too wild to be checked by her voice; and as she advanced to capture him, he shot like an arrow to the other end of the passage, and down the backstairs. She promised speedy rescue, and hurried down, hoping to seize the culprit in the hall, but he had whipped out at the back-door, and

was making for the garden gate, when his father hastened down the path to meet him, and seeing his retreat cut off, he plunged into the bushes, and sprang like a cat up a cockspur-thorn, too slender for ascent by a heavier weight, and thence grinned and waved his hand to his prisoner at the window.

‘Maurice,’ called his father, ‘what does this mean?’

‘I only want to take home Ulick’s picture. Then I’ll let him out.’

‘What picture?’

‘That’s my secret.’

‘This is not play, Maurice,’ said Albinia. ‘Attend to papa.’

The boy swung the light shrub about with him in a manner fearful to behold, and looked irresolute. Lucy put in her cry, ‘You very naughty child, give up the key this moment;’ and above, Algernon bawled appeals to Mr. Kendal, and threats to Maurice.

‘Silence!’ said Mr. Kendal, sternly. ‘Maurice, this must not be. Come down, and give me the key of your room.’

‘I will, papa,’ said Maurice, in a reasonable voice. ‘Only please promise not to let Algernon have Ulick’s picture, for I got it without his knowing it.’

‘I promise,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘Let us put an end to this.’

Maurice came down, and brought the key to his father, and while Lucy hastened to release her husband, Mr. Kendal seized the boy, finding him already about again to take flight.

‘Papa, let me take home Ulick’s picture before he gets out,’ said Maurice, finding the grasp too strong for him; but Mr. Kendal had taken the picture out of his hand, and looked at it with changed countenance.

It depicted the famous drawing-room scene, in its native element, the moon squinting through inky clouds at Lucy swooning on the sofa, while the lofty presence of the Polysyllable discharged the fluid from the inkstand.

‘Did Mr. O’More give you this?’ asked Mr. Kendal.

‘No, it tumbled out of his paper-case. You know he

said I might go to his rooms and get the *Illustrated News* with the picture of Balaklava, and so the newspaper knocked the paper-case down, and all the things tumbled out, so I picked this up, and thought I would see what Algernon would say to it, and then put it back again. Let me have it, papa; if he catches me, he'll tear it to smithereens.'

'Don't talk Irish, sir,' said his father. 'I see where your impertinence comes from, and I will put a stop to it.'

Maurice gave back a step, amazed at his father's unwonted anger; but far greater wrath was descending in the person of Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy, who came striding across the lawn, and planting himself before his father-in-law, demanded, 'I beg to know, sir, if it is your desire that I should be deliberately insulted in this house?'

'No one can be more concerned than I am at what has occurred.'

'Very well, sir; then I require that this intolerable child be soundly flogged, that beggarly Irishman kicked out, and that infamous libel destroyed!'

'Oh, papa,' cried Maurice, 'you promised me the picture should be safe!'

'I promise you, you impudent brat,' cried Algernon, 'that you shall learn what it is to insult your elders! You shall be flogged till you repent it!'

'You will allow me to judge of the discipline of my own family,' said Mr. Kendal.

'Ay! I knew how it would be! You encourage that child in every sort of unbearable impudence; but I have endured it long enough, and I give you warning that I do not remain another night under this roof unless I see the impertinence flogged out of him.'

'Papa never whips me,' interposed Maurice. 'You must ask mamma.'

Mr. Kendal bit his lips, and Albinia could have smiled, but their sense of the ludicrous inflamed Algernon, and like one beside himself, he swung round, and declaring he should ask his uncle if that were proper treat-

ment, he marched across the lawn, while Mr. Kendal exclaimed, 'More childish than Maurice!'

'Oh, mamma, what shall I do?' was Lucy's woful cry, as she turned back, finding herself unable to keep up with his huge steps, and her calls disregarded.

'My dear,' said Albinia, affectionately, 'you had better compose yourself, and follow him. His uncle will bring him to reason, and then you can tell him how sorry we are.'

'You may assure him,' said Mr. Kendal, 'that I am as much hurt as he can be, that such an improper use should have been made of O'More's intimacy here, and I mean to mark my sense of it.'

'And,' said Lucy, 'I don't think anything would pacify him so much as Maurice being only a little beaten, not to hurt him, you know.'

'If Maurice be punished, it shall not be in revenge,' said Mr. Kendal.

'I'm afraid nothing else will do,' said Lucy, wringing her hands. 'He has really declared that he will not sleep another night here unless Maurice is punished; and whatever he says, he'll do, and I know it would kill me to go away in this manner.'

Her father confidently averred that he would do no such thing, but she cried so much as to move Maurice into exclaiming, 'Look here, Lucy, I'll come up with you, and let him give me one good punch, and then we shall all be comfortable again.'

'I don't know about the punching,' said Albinia; 'but I think the least you can do, Maurice, is to go and ask his forgiveness for having been so very naughty. You were not thinking what you were about when you locked him in.'

This measure was adopted, Mr. Kendal accompanying Lucy and the boy, while Albinia went in search of Sophy, whom she found in grandmamma's room, looking very pale. 'Well?' was the inquiry, and she told what had passed.

'I hope Maurice will be punished,' said Sophy; so unwonted a sentiment, that Albinia quite started, though it was decidedly her own opinion.

‘That meddling with papers was very bad,’ she said, with an extenuating smile.

‘Fun is a perfect demon when it becomes master,’ said Sophy. It was plain that it was not Maurice that she was thinking of, but the caricature. Her sister should have been sacred from derision.

‘We must remember,’ she said, ‘that it was only through Maurice’s meddling that we became aware of the existence of this precious work. It is not as if he had shown it to any one.’

‘How many of the O’Mores have made game of it?’ asked Sophy, bitterly. ‘No, I am glad I know of it; I shall not be deceived any more.’

With these words she withdrew, evidently resolved to put an end to the subject. Her face was like iron, and Albinia grieved for the deep resentment that the man whom she had ventured to think of as devoted to herself, had made game of her sister. Poor Sophy, to her that tryste had been a subject of unmitigated affliction and shame, and it was a cruel wound that Ulick O’More should, of all men, have turned it into ridicule. What would be the effect on her?

In process of time Mr. Kendal returned. ‘Albinia,’ he said, ‘this is a most unfortunate affair. He is perfectly impracticable, insists on starting for Paris to-morrow, and I verily believe he will.’

‘Poor Lucy.’

‘She is in such distress, that I could not bear to look at her, but he will not attend to her, nor to his uncle and aunt. Mrs. Dusautoy proposed that they should come to the vicarage, where there would be no danger of collisions with Maurice; but his mind can admit no idea but that he has been insulted, and that we encourage it, and he thinks his dignity concerned in resenting it.’

‘Not much dignity in being driven off the field by a child of six years old.’

‘So his aunt told him, but he mixes it up with O’More, and insists on my complaining to Mr. Goldsmith, and getting the lad dismissed for a libellous caricaturist, as he calls it. Now, little as I should have ex-

pected such conduct from O'More, it could not be made a ground of complaint to his uncle.'

'I should think not. No one with more wit than Algernon would have dreamt of it! But if Ulick came and apologized? Ah! but I forgot! Mr. Goldsmith sent him to London this morning. Well, it may be better that he should be out of the way of Algernon in his present mood.'

'Humph!' said Mr. Kendal. 'It is the first time I ever allowed a stranger to be intimate in my family, and it shall be the last. I never imagined him aware of the circumstance.'

'Nor I; I am sure none of us mentioned it.'

'Maurice told him, I suppose. It is well that we should be aware who has instigated the child's impertinence. I shall keep him as much as possible with me; he must be cured of Irish brogue and Irish coolness before they are confirmed.'

Mr. Kendal's conscience was evidently relieved by transferring to the Irishman the imputation of fostering Maurice's malpractices.

They were interrupted by Lucy's arrival. She was come to take leave of home, for her lord was not to be dissuaded from going to London by the evening's train. The greater the consternation, the sweeter his revenge. Never able to see more than one side of a question, he could not perceive how impossible it was for the Kendals to fulfil his condition with regard to Ulick O'More, and he sullenly adhered to his obstinate determination. Lucy was in an agony of grief, and perhaps the most painful blow was the perception how little he was swayed by consideration for her. Her maid packed, while her parents tried to console her. It was easier when she bewailed the terrors of the voyage, and the uncertainty of hearing of dear grandmamma and dear Gilbert, than when she sobbed about Algernon having no feeling for her. It might be only too true, but her wifely submission ought not to have acknowledged it, and they would not hear when they could not comfort; and so they were forced to launch her on the world, with a tyrant instead of a guide,

and dreading the effect of dissipation on her levity of mind, as much as they grieved for her feeble spirit. It was a piteous parting—a mournful departure for a bride—a heavy penalty for vanity and weakness.

Unfortunately the result is to an action as the lens through which it is viewed, and the turpitude of the deed seems to increase or diminish according to the effect it produces.

Had it been in Algernon Dusautoy's nature to receive the joke good-humouredly, it might have been regarded as an audacious exercise of wit, and have been quickly forgotten; but when it had actually made a breach between him and his wife's family, and driven him from Bayford when everything conspired to make his departure unfeelingly cruel, the caricature was regarded as a serious insult and an abuse of intimacy. Even Mr. Kendal was not superior to this view, feeling the offence with all the sensitiveness of a hot-tempered man, a proud reserved guardian of the sanctities of home, and of a father who had seen his daughter's weakest and most faulty action turned into ridicule; and he seemed to feel himself bound to atone for not going to all the lengths to which Algernon would have impelled him, by showing the utmost displeasure within the bounds of common sense.

Albinia, better appreciating the irresistibly ludicrous aspect of the adventure, argued that the sketch harmlessly shut up in a paper-case showed no great amount of insolence, and that considering how the discovery had been made, it ought not to be visited. She thought the drawing had better be restored without remarks by the same hand that had abstracted it; but Mr. Kendal sternly declared this was impossible, and Sophy's countenance seconded him.

'Well, then,' said Albinia, 'put it into my hands. I'm a bad manager in general, but I can promise that Ulick will come down so shocked and concerned, that you will not have the heart not to forgive him.'

'The question is not of forgiveness,' said Sophy, in the most rigid of voices, as she saw yielding in her fa-

ther's face; if any one had to forgive, it was poor Lucy and Algernon. All we have to do is to be on our guard for the future.'

'Sophy is right,' said Mr. Kendal; 'intimacy must be over with one who has so little discretion or good taste.'

'Then after his saving Maurice, he is to be given up, because he quizzed the Polysyllable!' cried Albinia.

'I do not give him up,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I highly esteem his good qualities, and should be happy to do him a service, but I cannot have my family at the mercy of his wit, nor my child taught disrespect. We have been unwisely familiar, and must retreat.'

'And what do you mean us to do?' exclaimed Albinia. 'Are we to cut him systematically?'

'I do not know what course you may adopt,' said Mr. Kendal, in a tone whose grave precision rebuked her half petulant, half facetious inquiry. 'I have told you that I do not mean to do anything extravagant, nor to discontinue ordinary civilities, but I think that you will find our former habits are not resumed.'

'And Maurice must not be always with him,' said Sophy.

'Certainly not; I shall keep the boy with myself.'

It was with the greatest effort that Albinia held her tongue. To have Sophy not only making common cause against her, but inciting her father to interfere about Maurice, was well-nigh intolerable, and she only endured it by sealing her lips as with a bar of iron.

By-and-by came the reflection that if poor Sophy had a secret cause of bitterness, it was she herself who had given those thoughts substance and consciousness, and she quickly forgave every one save herself and Algernon.

As to her little traitor son, she took him seriously in hand at bed-time, and argued the whole transaction with him, representing the dreadful consequences of meddling with people's private papers under trust. Here was poor Lucy taken away from home, and papa made very angry with Ulick, because Maurice had been meddlesome and mischievous; and though he had not been beaten for it,

he would find it a worse punishment not to be trusted another time, nor allowed to be with Ulick.

Maurice turned round with mouth open at hearing of papa's anger with Ulick, and the accusation of having brought his friend into trouble.

'Why, Maurice, you remember how unhappy we were, Gilbert and all. It was because it was sadly wrong of Gilbert and Lucy to have let Algernon in without papa's knowing it, and it was not right or friendly in Ulick to laugh at what was so wrong, and grieved us all so much.'

'It was such fun,' said Maurice.

'Yes, Maurice; but fun is no excuse for doing what is unkind and mischievous. Ulick would not have been amused if he had cared as much for us as we thought he did; but, after all, his drawing the picture would have done no harm but for a little boy, whom he trusted, never thinking that an unkind wish to tease, would betray this foolish action, and set his best friends against him.'

'I did not know I should,' said Maurice, winking hard.

'No; you did not know you were doing what, if you were older, would have been dishonourable.'

That word was too much! First he hid his face from his mother, and cried out fiercely, 'I've not—I've not been *that*;' and clenched his fist.

'Don't say it, mamma.'

'If you had known what you were doing, it would have been dishonourable,' she repeated, gravely. 'It will be a long time before you earn trust and confidence again.'

There was a great struggle with his tears. She *had* punished him, and almost more than she could bear to see, but she knew the conquest must be secured, and she tried, while she caressed him, to make him look at the real cause of his lapse; he declared that it was 'such fun' to provoke Algernon, and a little more brought out a confession of the whole course of persecution; the child's voice becoming quite triumphant as he told of the success of his tricks, and his mother, though appalled at their audacity, with great difficulty hindering herself from manifesting her amusement.

She did not wonder at Algernon's having found it intolerable, and though angry with him for having made himself such fair game, she set to work to impress upon Maurice his own errors, and the hatefulness of practical jokes, and she succeeded so far as to leave him crying himself to sleep, completely subdued, while she felt as if all the tears ought to have been shed by herself for her want of vigilance.

Conflicting duties ! how hard to strike the balance ! She had readily given up her own pleasures for the care of Mrs. Meadows, but when it came to her son's training, it was another question.

She much wished to see the note with which Mr. Kendal returned the unfortunate sketch, but one of the points on which he was sensitive, was the sacredness of his correspondence, and all that she heard was, that Ulick had answered 'not at all as Mr. Kendal had expected ; he was nothing but an Irishman, after all.' But at last she obtained a sight of the note.

BAYFORD, *Nov. 20th, 1854.*

'Dear Sir,

'I was much astonished at the contents of your letter of this morning, and greatly concerned that Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy should have done so much honour to any production of mine, as to alter his arrangements on that account.

'As the scrawl in question was not meant to meet the eye of any living being, I should, for my own part, have considered it proper to take no notice of what was betrayed by mere accident. I should have considered it more conducive to confidence between gentlemen. I fully acquiesce in what you say of the cessation of our former terms of acquaintance, and with many thanks for past kindness, believe me,

'Your obedient servant,

'U. O'MORE.'

Nothing was more evidently written in a passion at the invasion of these private papers, and Albinia, though she had always feared he might consider himself the aggrieved party, had hardly expected so much proud irrita-

tion and so little regret. Mr. Kendal called him 'foolish boy,' and tried to put the matter aside, but he was much hurt; and Ulick put himself decidedly in the wrong by passing in the street with a formal bow, when Mr. Kendal, according to his purpose of ordinary civility without an open rupture, would have shaken hands.

Sophy looked white, stern, and cold, but said not a word; she deepened her father's displeasure quite sufficiently by her countenance. His was grave disappointment in a youth whom he found less grateful than he thought he had a right to expect; hers was the rankling of what she deemed an insult to her sister, and the festering of a wound of which she was ashamed. She meant to bear it well, but it made her very hard and rigid, and even the children could hardly extract a smile from her. She seemed to have made a determination to do all that Lucy or herself had ever done, and more too, and listened to no entreaties to spare herself. Commands were met with sullen resignation, entreaties were unavailing, and both in the sick-room and the parish, she insisted on working beyond her powers. It was a mighty battle to send her to bed, and Albinia suspected that she did not sleep. Meantime Lucy had sailed, and was presently heard of in a whirl of excitement that shortened her letters, and made them joyous and self-important.

'Ah!' said Sophy, 'she will soon forget that she ever had a home.'

'Poor dear! Wait till trouble comes, and she will remember it only too sadly,' sighed Albinia.

'Trouble is certain enough,' said Sophy; 'but I don't think what we deserve does us much good.'

Sophy could see nothing but the most ungentle and gloomy aspects. Gilbert had not yet written, and she was convinced that he was either very ill, or had only recovered to be killed at Inkermann, and she would only sigh at the Gazette that announced Lieutenant Gilbert Kendal's promotion to be Captain, and Major the Honourable Frederick Ferrars to be Lieutenant-Colonel.

The day after, however, came the long-expected letter from the captain himself. It was to Mrs. Kendal, and

she detected a shade of disappointment on her husband's face, so she would have handed it to him at once, but he said, 'No, the person to whom the letter is addressed should always be the first to read it.'

The letter began with Gilbert's happiness in those from home, which he called the greatest pleasure he had ever known. He feared he had caused uneasiness by not writing sooner, but it had been out of his power while Fred Ferrars was in danger. Then followed the account of the severe illness from which Fred was scarcely beginning to rally, though that morning, on hearing that he was to be sent home as soon as he could move, he had talked about Canada and Emily. Gilbert said that not only time but strength had been wanting for writing, for attendance on Fred had been all that he could attempt, since moving produced so much pain and loss of breath, that he had been forced to be absolutely still whenever he was not wanted, but he was now much better. 'Though,' he continued, 'I do not now mind telling you that I had thought myself gone. You, who have known all my feelings, and have borne with them so kindly, will understand the effect upon me, when on the night previous to the 25th, I distinctly heard my own name, in Edmund's voice, at the head of my bed, just as he used to call me when he had finished his lessons, and wanted me to come out with him. As I started up, I heard it again outside the tent. I ran to the door, but of course there was nothing, nor did poor Wynne hear anything. I lay awake for some time, but slept at last, and had forgotten all by morning. It did not even occur to me when I saw the pleasant race they had cut out for us, nor through the whole affair. Do not ask me to describe it, the scene haunts me enough. When I found that I had not come off unhurt, and it seemed as if I could not ask for one of our fellows but to hear he was dead or dying, poor Wynne among them, then the voice seemed a summons. I was thoroughly done up, and could not even speak when General Ferrars came to me; I only wanted to be let alone, to die in peace. I fancy I slept, for the next thing I heard was the Major's voice asking for some water, too

feebly to wake the fellow who had been left in charge. I got up, and found him in a state of high fever and great pain, and from that time to the present, I have hardly thought of the circumstance, and know not why I have now written it to you. Did my danger actually bring Edmund nearer, or did its presence act on my imagination! Be that as it may, I think, after the first impression of awe and terror, the having heard the dear old voice braced me, and gave me a sense of being near home, and less lonely. Not that my hurt has been for an instant dangerous, and I am mending every day; if it were warmer, I should get on faster, but I cannot stir into the air without bringing on cough. Tell Ulick O'More that we entertained his brother at tea last evening; we were obliged to desire him to bring his own cup, and he produced the shell of a land tortoise; it was very like the fox and the crane. Poor fellow, it was the first good meal he had for weeks, and I was glad he came in for some famous bread that the General had sent us in. He made us much more merry than was convenient to either of us, not being in condition for laughing. He is a fine lad, and liked by all.' Then came a break, and the letter closed with such tidings of Inkermann as had reached the invalid's tent.

A few lines from General Ferrars spoke of the improvement in both patients, adding that Fred had had a hard struggle for his life, and had only been saved by Gilbert's unremitting care by day and night.

Heroism had not transformed Gilbert, and Albinia's old fondness glowed with double ardour as she mused over his history of the battle-eve. His father attributed the impression to a mind full of presage and excitement, acted upon by strong memory; but woman-like, Albinia preferred the belief that the one twin might have been an actual messenger to cheer and strengthen the other for the coming trial. Sophy only said, 'Gilbert's fancies as usual.'

'This was not like fancy,' said Albinia. 'This is an unkind way of taking it.'

'It is common sense,' she bluntly answered. 'I don't

see why he should think that Edmund has nothing better to do than to call him. It would be childish.'

Albinia did not reply, disturbed by this display of jealousy and harshness, as if every bud of tenderness had been dried up and withered, and poor Sophy only wanted to run counter to any obvious sentiment.

Albinia was grateful for the message which gave her an excuse for seeking Ulick out, and endeavouring to conciliate him. Mr. Kendal made no objection, and expressed a hope that he might have become reasonable. She therefore contrived to waylay him in the November darkness, holding out her hand so that he took it at unawares, as if not recollecting that he was offended, but in the midst his grasp relaxed, and his head went up.

'I have a message for you from Gilbert about your brother Bryan,' she said; and he could not defend himself from manifesting eager interest, as she told of the tea-party; but that over, it was in stiff formal English that he said, 'I hope you had a good account.'

It struck a chill, and she answered, almost imploringly, 'Gilbert is much better, thank you.'

'I am glad to hear it;' and he was going to bow, and pass on, when she exclaimed,

'Ulick, why are we strangers?'

'It was agreed on all hands that things past could not be undone,' he rigidly replied.

'Too true,' she said; 'but I do not think you know how sorry we are for my poor little boy's foolish trick.'

'I owe no displeasure to Maurice. He knew no more what he was doing than if he had been a gust of wind; but if the wind had borne a private paper to my feet, I would never have acted on the contents.'

'Unhappily,' said Albinia, 'some revelations, though received against our will, cannot help being felt. We saw the drawing before we knew how he came by it, and you cannot wonder that it gave pain to find that a scene so distressing to us should have furnished you with amusement. It was absurd in itself, but we had hoped it was a secret, and it wounded us because we thought you would have been tender of our feelings.'

'You don't mean that it was a fact!' cried Ulick, stopping suddenly; and as her silence replied, he continued, 'I give you my word and honour that I never imagined there was a word of truth in the farrago old Biddy told me, and I'll not deny that I did scrawl the scene down as the very picture of a bit of slander. I only wonder I'd not brought it to yourself.'

'Pray let me hear what she told you.'

'Oh! she said the two had been colloquing together by moonlight, and you came home in the midst, and Miss Kendal fainted away, so he catches up the ink and throws it over her instead of water, and you and Mr. Kendal came in and were mad entirely; and Mr. Kendal threatened to brain him with the poker if he did not quit it that instant, and sent Gilbert for a soldier for opening the door to him, but you and Lucy went down on your bare knees to get him to relent.'

'Well, I own the poker does throw an air of improbability over the whole. Minus that and the knees, I am afraid it is only too true. I suppose it got abroad through the servants.'

'It was an unlucky goose-quill that lay so handy,' exclaimed Ulick; 'but you may credit me, no eye but my own ever saw the scrawl, nor would have seen it.'

'Then Ulick, if we all own that something is to be regretted, why do we stand aloof, and persist in quarrelling?'

'I want no quarrel,' said Ulick, stiffly. 'Mr. Kendal intimated to me that he did not wish for my company, and I'm not the man to force it.'

'Oh, Ulick, this is not what I hoped from you!'

'I'll tell you what, Mrs. Kendal, you could talk over the Giant's Causeway if you had a mind,' said Ulick, with much agitation; 'but you must not talk over me, for your own judgment would be against it. You know what I am, and what I came of, and what have I in the world except the honour of a gentleman? Mr. Kendal and yourself have been my kindest friends, and I'll be grateful to my dying day; but if Mr. Kendal thinks I can submit tamely when he resents what he never ought

to have noticed; why, then, what have I to do but to show him the difference? If his kindness was to me as a gentleman and his equal, I love and bless him for it, but if it be a patronizing of the poor clerk, why, then, I owe it to myself and my people to show that I can stand alone, without cringing, and being thankful for affronts.'

'Did it ever occur to you to think whether pride be a sin?'

'Tis not pride!' cried Ulick. 'It is my duty to my family and my name. You'd say yourself, as you allowed before now, that it would be mere meanness and servility to swallow insults for one's own profit; and if I were to say "you're welcome, with many thanks, to shuffle over my private papers, and call myself to account," I'd better have given up my name at once, for I'd have left the gentleman behind me.'

'I do believe it is solely for the O'Mores that you are making a duty of implacability!'

'It is a duty not to run from one's word, and debase oneself for one's own advantage.'

'One would think some wonderful advantage was held out to you.'

'The pleasantest hours of my life,' murmured he sadly, under his breath.

'Well, Ulick,' she said, holding out her hand, 'I'm not quite dissatisfied; I think some day even an O'More will see that there is no exception from the law of forgiveness in their special favour, and that you will not be able to go on resenting what we have suffered from the young of the spider-monkey.'

Even this allusion produced no outward effect; he only shook hands gravely, saying, 'I never did otherwise than forgive, and regret the consequences: I am very thankful for all your past kindness.'

Worse than the Giant's Causeway, thought Albinia as she parted from him. Nothing is so hopeless as that sort of forgiveness, because it satisfies the conscience.

Mr. Kendal predicted that, the Keltic dignity having been asserted, good sense and principle would restore things to a rational footing. What this meant, might be

uncertain, but he certainly missed Prometheus, and found Maurice a poor substitute. Indulgence itself could hardly hold out in unmitigated intercourse with an obstreperous dunce not seven years old, and Maurice, deprived of Gilbert, cut off from Ulick, with mamma busy, and Sophy out of spirits, underwent more snubbing than had ever yet fallen to his lot. Not that he was much concerned thereat; and Mr. Kendal would resume his book after a lecture upon good manners, and then be roused to find his library a gigantic cobweb, strings tied to every leg of table or chair, and Maurice and the little Awk enacting spider and fly, heedless of the unwilling flies who might suffer by their trap. Such being the case, his magnanimity was the less amazing when he said, 'Albinia, there is no reason that O'More should not eat his Christmas dinner here.'

'Very well. I trust he will not think it needful still to be self-denying.'

'It is not our part to press advances which are repelled,' said Sophy.

'Indeed, Sophy,' said her father, smiling, 'I see nothing attractive in the attitude of rocks rent asunder.'

The undesigned allusion must have gone deep, for she coloured to a purple crimson, and said in a freezing tone, 'I thought you considered that to take him up again would be a direct insult to Lucy and her husband.'

'They do not show much consideration for us,' said Mr. Kendal. 'How long ago was the date of her last letter?'

'Nearly three weeks,' said Albinia. 'Poor child, how could she write with the catalogue *raisonnée* of the Louvre to learn by heart?'

The Dusautoys yearly gave a Christmas tea-party to the teachers in the Sunday-school, who had of late become more numerous, as Mr. Dusautoy's influence had had more time to tell. Mrs. Kendal was reckoned on as one of the chief supporters of the gaiety of the evening, but on this occasion she was forced to send Sophia alone.

Sophy regarded it as a duty and a penance, and submitted the more readily because it was so distasteful. It

was, however, more than she had reckoned on to find that the party had been extended to the male teachers, an exceedingly good and lugubrious-looking youth lately apprenticed to Mr. Bowles, and Ulick O'More. It was the first time she had met the latter since his offence. She avoided seeing him as long as possible, though all his movements seemed to thrill her, and so confused the conversation which she was trying to keep up, that she found herself saying that G  n  vi  e Durant had lost an arm, and that Gilbert would spend Christmas in London.

She felt him coming nearer ; she knew he was passing the Miss Northover in the purple silk and red neck-ribbon ; she heard him exchanging a few civil words with the sister with the hair strained off her face ; she knew he was coming ; she grew more eager in her fears for Mr. Rainsforth's chest.

Tea was announced. Sophy held back in the general move, Ulick made a step nearer, their eyes met, and if ever eyes spoke, hers ordered him to keep his distance, while he glanced affront for affront, bowed, and stepped back.

Sophy sat by Miss Jane Northover, and endeavoured to make her talk. Anything would have been better than the echoes of the sprightliness at the lower end of the table, where Ulick was talking what he would have called blarney to Miss Susan Northover and Miss Mary Anne Higgins, both at once, till he excited them into a perpetual giggle. Mr. Dusautoy was delighted, and evidently thought this brilliant success ; Mrs. Dusautoy was less at her ease—the mirth was less sober and more exclusive than she had intended ; and Sophy, finding nothing could be made of Miss Jane, turned round to her other neighbour, Mr. Hope, and asked his opinion of the Whewell and Brewster controversy on the Plurality of Worlds.

Mr. Hope had rather a good opinion of Miss Sophia, and as she had never molested him, could talk to her, so he straightway became engrossed in the logical and theological aspects of the theory ; and Mrs. Dusautoy could hardly suppress her smile at this unconscious ponderous

attempt at a counter flirtation, with Saturn and Jupiter as weapons for light skirmishing.

Ulick received the invitation to dinner, and did not accept it. He said he had an engagement—Albinia wondered what it could be, and had reason afterwards to think that he had the silent young apothecary to a Christmas dinner in his own rooms—an act of charity at least, if not of forgiveness. Mr. Johns, the senior clerk, whose health had long been failing, was about to retire, and this announcement was followed by the appearance of a smart, keen-looking young man of six or seven-and-twenty, whom Miss Goldsmith paraded as her cousin, Mr. Andrew Goldsmith, and it was generally expected that he would be taken into partnership, and undertake old John's work; but in a fortnight he disappeared, and young O'More was promoted to the vacant post with an increase of salary. It was mortifying only to be informed through Mr. Dusautoy, instead of by the lad himself.

The Eastern letters were the chief comfort. First came tidings that Gilbert, not having yet recovered his contusion, was to accompany Colonel Ferrars to Scutari, and then after a longer interval came a brief and joyous note—Gilbert was coming home! On his voyage from the Crimea he had caught cold, and this had brought on severe inflammation on the injured chest, which had laid him by for many days at Scutari. The colonel had become the stronger of the two, in spite of a fragment of shell lodged so deeply in the side, that the medical board advised his going to London for its removal. Both were ordered home together with six months' leave, and Gilbert's note overflowed with glad messages to all, including Algernon, of whose departure he was still in ignorance.

Mr. Kendal knew not whether he was most gratified or discomfited by the insinuating ringer who touched his hat, hoping for due notice of the captain's arrival in time to welcome him with a peal of bells. Indeed, Bayford was so excited about its hero, that there were symptoms of plans for a grand reception with speeches, cheers, and triumphal arches, which caused Sophy to say she hoped that he would come suddenly without any notice so as to

put a stop to all that nonsense; while Albinia could not help nourishing a strange vague expectation that his return would be the beginning of better days.

At last Sophia, with a touch of the old, penny-club fever, toiled over the school clothing wilfully and unnecessarily for two hours, kept up till evening without owning to the pain in her back, but finally returned so faint and dizzy that she was forced to be carried helpless to her room, and the next day could barely drag herself to the couch in the morning-room, where she lay quite prostrated, and grieved at increasing instead of lessening her mother's cares.

'Oh, mamma, don't stay with me, you are much too busy.'

'No, I am not. The children are out, and grand-mamma asleep, and I am going to write to Lucy; but there's no hurry. Let me cool your forehead a little longer.'

'How I hate being another bother !

'I like you much better so, than when you would not let me speak to you, my poor child.'

'I could not,' she said, stifling her voice on the cushion, and averting her head; but in a few moments, she made a great effort, and said, 'You think me unforgiving, mamma. It was not entirely that. I was hating myself for an old fancy, a mere mistake. I have got over it; and I will not be in error again.'

'Sophy dear, if you find strength in pride, it will only wound yourself.'

'I do not think I am proud,' said Sophy, quietly. 'I may have been headstrong, but I despise myself too much for pride.'

'Are you sure it was mere fancy? It was an idea that occurred to more than to you.'

'Hush!' cried Sophy. 'Had it been so, could he have ridiculed Lucy? Could he have flown out so against papa? No; that caricature undeceived me, and I am thankful. He treated us as cousins—no more—he would act in the same manner by any of the Miss O'Mores of Ballymakilty, nay, by Jane Northover herself. We did not allow for Irish manner.'

‘If so, he had no right to do so. I shall never wish to see him here again.’

‘No, mamma, he did not know the folly he had to deal with. Next time I meet him, I shall know how to be really indifferent. Now, this is the last time we will mention the subject!’

Albinia obeyed, but still hoped. It was well that hope remained, for her task was heavier than ever; Mrs. Meadows was feebler, but more restless and wakeful, asking twenty times in an hour for Mrs. Kendal. The doctors thought it impossible that she should hold out another fortnight, but she lived on from day to day, and at times Albinia hardly could be absent from her for ten minutes together. Sophy was so completely knocked up, that she could barely creep about the house, and was forbidden the sick-room; but she was softened and gentle, and was once more a companion to her father, while eagerly looking forward to devoting herself to Gilbert.

A letter with the Malta postmark was eagerly opened, as the harbinger of his speedy arrival.

ROYAL HOTEL, MALTA, *February 10th, 1855.*

‘Dearest Mrs. Kendal,

‘I am afraid you will all be much disappointed, though your grief cannot equal mine at the doctor’s cruel decree. We arrived here the day before yesterday, but I had been so ill all the voyage with pain in the side and cough, that there was no choice but to land, and call in Dr. —, who tells me that my broken rib has damaged my lungs so much, that I must keep perfectly quiet, and not think of going home till warm weather. If I am well enough to join by that time, I shall not see you at all unless you and my father could come out. Am I nourishing too wild a hope in thinking it possible? Since Lucy has been so kind, as to promise never to leave grandmamma, I cannot help hoping you might be spared. I do not think my proposal is selfish, since my poor grandmother is so little conscious of your cares; and Ferrars insists on remaining with me till he sees me in your hands, though they say that the splinter must be extracted in London, and every week he remains here is

so much suffering, besides delaying his expedition to Canada. I have entreated him to hasten on, but he will not hear of it. He is like a brother or a father to me, and nurses me most tenderly, when he ought to be nursed himself. We are famishing for letters. I suppose all ours have gone up to Balaklava, and thence will be sent to England. If we were but there! We are both much better for the quiet of these two days, and are to move to-morrow to a lodging that a friend of Fred's has taken for us at Bormola, so as to be out of the Babel of these streets—we stipulated that it should be large enough to take in you and my father. I wish Sophy and the children would come too—it would do them all the good in the world; and Maurice would go crazy among the big guns; I am only afraid we should have him enlisting as a drummer. The happy pair would be very glad to have the house to themselves, and would persuade themselves that it was another honeymoon.

'Good-by. Instead of looking for a letter, I shall come down to meet you at the Quarantine harbour. Love to all.

'Your most affectionate

'GILBERT KENDAL.'

How differently Gilbert wrote when really ill, from his desponding style when he only fancied himself so, thought Albinia, as, perplexed and grieved, she handed the letter to her husband, and opened the enclosure, written in the laboured, ill-formed characters of a left-hand not yet accustomed to doing the offices of both.

'Dear Albinia,

'Come, if possible. His heart is set upon it, though he does not realize his condition, and I cannot bear to tell him. Only the utmost care can save him. I am doing my best for him, but my nursing is as left-handed as my writing.

'Ever yours,

'F. F.'

His wife's look of horror was Mr. Kendal's preparation for this emphatic summons, perhaps a shock less

sudden to him than to her, for he had not been without misgivings ever since he had heard of the situation of the injury. He read and spoke not, till the silence became intolerable, and she burst out almost with a scream, 'Oh! Edmund, I knew not what I did when I took grandmamma into this house!'

'This is very perplexing,' he said, his feelings so intense that he dared only speak of acting; 'I must set out to-night.'

'Order me to come with you,' she said, breathlessly. 'That will cancel everything else.'

'Would Mrs. Drury take charge of her aunt?' said he, with a moment's hesitation; and Albinia felt it implied his impression that they were bound by her repeated promises never to quit the invalid, but she only spoke the more vehemently—

'Mrs. Drury? She might—she would, under the circumstances. She could not refuse. If you desire me to come, I should not be doing wrong; and grandmamma might never even miss me. Surely—oh surely, a young life, full of hope and promise, that may yet be saved, is not to be set against what cannot be prolonged more than a few weeks.'

'As to that,' said Mr. Kendal, in the deliberate tone which denoted dissatisfaction, 'though of course it would be the greatest blessing to have you with us, I think you may trust Gilbert to my care. And we must consider poor Sophia.'

'She could not bear to be considered.'

'No; but it would be leaving her in a most distressing position, when she is far from well, and with most uncongenial assistants. You see, poor Gilbert reckons on Lucy being here, which would make it very different. But think of poor Sophia in the event of Mrs. Meadows not surviving till our return!'

'You are right! It would half kill her! My promise was sacred; I was a wretch to think of breaking it. But when I think of my boy—my Gilbert pining for me, and I deserting him—'

'For the sake of duty,' said her husband. 'Let us

do right, and trust that all will be overruled for the best. I shall go with an easier mind if I leave you with the other children, and I can be the sooner with him.'

'I could travel as fast.'

'I may soon bring him home to you. Or you might bring the others to join us in the south of France. You will all need change.'

The decision was made, and her judgment acquiesced, though she could hardly have cast the balance for herself. She urged no more, even when relentings came over her husband at the thought of the trials to which he was leaving her, and of those which he should meet in solitude; yet not without a certain secret desire to make himself sufficient for the care and contentment of his own son. He cast about for all possible helpers for her, but could devise nothing except a note entreating her brother to be with her as much as possible, and commending her to the Dusautoys. It was a less decided kindness that he ordered Maurice's pony to be turned out to grass, so as to prevent rides in solitude, thinking the boy too young to be trusted, and warned by the example of Gilbert's temptations.

Going up to the bank to obtain a supply of gold, he found young O'More there without his uncle. The tidings of Gilbert's danger had spread throughout the town, and one heart at least was softened. Ulick rung the hand that lately he would not touch, and Mr. Kendal forgot his wrath as he replied to the warm-hearted inquiry for particulars.

'Then Mrs. Kendal cannot go with you?'

'No, it is impossible. There is no one able to take charge of Mrs. Meadows.'

'Ah! and Mrs. Cavendish Dusautoy is gone! I grieve for the hour when my pen got the better of me. Mr. Kendal, this is worse than I thought. Your son will never forgive me when he knows I am at the bottom of his disappointment.'

'There is something to forgive on all hands,' said Mr. Kendal. 'That meddlesome boy of mine has caused worse results than we could have contemplated. I believe it has been a lesson to him.'

'I know it has to some one else,' said Ulick 'I wish I could do anything! It would be the greatest comfort you could give me to tell me of a thing I could do for Gilbert or any of you. If you'd send me to find Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy, and tell him 'twas all my fault, and bring them back—

'Rather too wild a project, thank you,' said Mr. Kendal, smiling. 'No; the only thing you could do, would be if that boy of mine have not completely forfeited your kindness—

'Maurice? Ah! how I have missed the rogue.'

'Poor little fellow, I am afraid he may be a burthen to himself and every one else. It would be a great relief if you could be kind enough now and then to give him the pleasure of a walk.'

Maurice did not attend greatly to papa's permission to go out with Mr. O'More. Either it was clogged with too many conditions of discretion, and too many reminiscences of the past; or Maurice's mind was too much bent on the thought of his brother. Both children haunted the packing up, entreating to send out impossible presents. Maurice could hardly be persuaded out of contributing a perilous-looking boomerang, which he argued had some sense in it; while he scoffed at the little Awk, who stood kissing and almost crying over the china countenance of her favourite doll, entreating that papa would take dear Miss Jennie because Gibbie loved her the best of all, and always put her to sleep on his knees. At last matters were compromised by Sophy, who roused herself to do one of the few things for which she had strength, engrossing them by cutting out in paper an interminable hunt with horses and dogs adhering together by the noses and tails, which, when brilliantly painted according to their united taste, they might safely imagine giving pleasure to Gilbert, while at any rate it would do no harm in papa's pocket-book.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE day after Mr. Kendal's departure, Mrs. Meadows had another attack, but a fortnight still passed before the long long task was over and the weary spirit set free. There had been no real consciousness and no one could speak of regret; of anything but relief and thankfulness that release had come at last, when Albinia had redeemed her pledge and knew she should no more hear of the dreary 'very bad night,' nor be greeted by the low, restless moan. The long goodnight was come, and on the whole, there was peace and absence of self-condemnation in looking back upon the past connexion. Forbearance and unselfishness were recompensed by the calm tenderness with which she could regard one who at the outset had appeared likely to cause nothing but frets and misunderstandings.

Had she and Sophy been left to themselves, there would have been nothing to break upon this frame of mind, but early the next day arrived Mr. and Mrs. Drury, upsetting all her arrangements, implying that it had been presumptuous to exert any authority without relationship. It did seem hard that the claims of kindred should be only recollected in order to unsettle her plans, and offend her unostentatious tastes.

Averse both to the proposals, and to the discussion, she felt unprotected and forlorn, but her spirit revived as she heard her brother's voice in the hall, and she hastened to put herself in his hands. He declined doing battle; he said it would be better to yield than to argue, and leave a grudge forever. 'It will not vex Edmund,' he said; 'and though you and Sophy may be pained by incongruities, they will hurt you less than disputing.'

She felt that he was right, and by yielding the main points, he contrived amicably to persuade Mr. Drury out of the numerous invitations and grand luncheon as well as to adhere to the day that she had originally fixed for the funeral, after which he hoped to take her and the young ones home with him and give her the thorough

change and rest of which the over-energy of her manner betrayed the need.

Not that she consented. She could not bear not to meet her letters at once; or suppose Edmund and Gilbert should return to an empty, unaired house; and she thought herself selfish, when it might do so much good to Sophy, &c., &c., &c.—till Mr. Ferrars, going home for a night, agreed with Winifred, that domineering would be the only way to deal with her.

On his return he found Albinia on the stairs, and boxes and trunks carried down after her. Running to him, she exclaimed, abruptly, 'I am going to Malta, Maurice, to-morrow evening!'

'Has Edmund sent for you?'

'Not exactly—he did not know—but Gilbert is dying, and wretched at my not coming. I never wished him good-by—he thinks I did not forgive him. Don't say a word—I shall go.'

He held her trembling hands, and said, 'This is not the way to be able to go. Come in here; sit down and tell me.'

'It is no use to argue. It is my duty now,' said Albinia; but she let him lead her into the room, where Sophy was changing the bright border of a travelling cloak to crape, and Maurice stood watching, as if stunned.

'It is settled,' continued she, rapidly. 'Sophy and the children go to the vicarage. Yes, I know, you are very kind, but Maurice would be troublesome, and Winifred is not well enough, and the Dusautoys wish it.'

'Yes, that may be the best plan, as I shall be absent.'

She turned round, startled.

'I cannot let you go alone.'

'Nonsense—Winifred—Sunday—Lent—I don't want any one. Nothing could happen to me.'

Mr. Ferrars caught Sophy's eye beaming with sudden relief and gratitude, and repeated, 'If you go, I must take you.'

'I can't wait for Sunday,' she said.

'What have you heard?'

She produced the letter, and read parts of it. The whole stood thus:—

‘BORKOLA, 11 P. M., *February 28th, 1855.*

‘Dearest Albinia,

‘I hope all has gone on fairly well with you in my absence, and that Sophia is well again. Could I have foreseen the condition of affairs here, I doubt whether I could have resolved on leaving you at home, though you may be spared much by not being with us. I landed at noon to-day, and was met in the harbour by your cousin, who had come off in a boat in hopes of finding you on board. He did his best to prepare me for Gilbert’s appearance, but I was more shocked than I can express. There can no longer be any doubt that it is a case of rapid decline, brought on by exposure, and aggravated by the injury at Balaklava. Colonel Ferrars fancies that Gilbert’s exertions on his behalf in the early part of his illness may have done harm, by preventing the broken bone from uniting, and causing it to press on the lungs; but knowing the constitutional tendency, we need not dwell on secondary causes, and there is no one to whom we owe a deeper debt of gratitude than to your cousin, for his most assiduous and affectionate attendance at a time when he is very little equal to exertion. They are like brothers together, and I am sure nothing has been wanting to Gilbert that he could devise for his comfort. They are in a tolerably commodious airy lodging, where I found Gilbert propped up with cushions on a large chair by the window, flushed with eager watching. Poor fellow, to see how his countenance fell when he found I was alone, was the most cutting reproach I ever received in my life. He was so completely overcome, that he could not restrain his tears, though he strove hard to command himself in the fear of wounding my feelings; but there are moments when the truth will have its way, and you have been more to him than his father has ever been. May it be granted that he may yet know how I feel towards him! His first impression was that you had never forgiven him for his unfortunate adventure with Maurice, and could never feel towards him as before; and though I trust I have removed this idea, perhaps such a letter as you can write might set his heart at rest. Ferrars says

that hitherto his spirits have kept up wonderfully, though latterly he had been evidently aware of his condition, but he has been very much depressed this evening, probably from the reaction of excited expectation. On learning the cause of Lucy's desertion, he seemed to consider that his participation in the transactions of that night had recoiled upon himself, and deprived him of your presence. It was very painful to see how he took it. He was eager to be told of the children, and the only time I saw him brighten was when I gave him their messages. I am writing while I hope he sleeps. I am glad to be here to relieve the Colonel, who for several nights past has slept on the floor, in his room, not thinking the Maltese servant trustworthy. He looks very ill and suffering, but seems to have no thought but for Gilbert, and will not hear of leaving him; and, in truth, they cling together so affectionately, that I could not bear to urge their parting, even were Fred more fit to travel home alone. I will close my letter to-morrow after the doctor's visit.'

The conclusion was even more desponding; the physician had spoken of the case as hopeless, and likely to terminate rapidly; and Gilbert, who was always at the worst in the morning, had shown no symptom that could lead his father to retract his first impression.

Mr. Ferrars saw that it would be useless and cruel to endeavour to detain his sister, and only doubted whether, in her precipitation, she might not cross and miss her husband in a still sadder journey homeward, and this made him the more resolved to be her escort. When she dissuaded him vehemently, as though she were bent on doing something desperate, he replied that he was anxious about Fred, and if she and her husband were engrossed by their son, he should be of service in bringing him home; and this somewhat reconciled her to what was so much to her benefit. Only she gave notice that he must not prevent her from travelling day and night, to which he made no answer, while Sophy hoarsely said that but for knowing herself to be a mere impediment, she should have insisted on going, and her uncle must not keep mamma back. Then Maurice imitatively broke out, 'Mamma, take me

to Gilbert; I won't be a plague, I promise you.' He was scarcely silenced before Mr. Dusautoy came striding in to urge on her that Fanny and himself should be much happier if he were permitted to conduct Mrs. Kendal to Malta (the fact being that Fanny was persuaded that Mr. Ferrars would obviate such necessity). Albinia almost laughed, as she had declared that she had set all the parsons in the country in commotion, and Mr. Dusautoy was obliged to limit his good offices to the care of the children, and the responsibility of the Fairmead Sunday services.

The good hard-worked brother had hardly time to eat his luncheon, before he started to inform his wife, and prepare for his journey. Winifred was a very good sister on an emergency; she had not once growled since poor Mrs. Meadows had been really ill; and though she had been feeding on hopes of Albinia's visit, and was far from strong, she quashed her husband's misgivings, and cheerily strove to convince him that he would be wanted by no one, least of all by herself. A slight vituperation of the polysyllabic pair was all the relief she permitted herself; and who could blame her for that, when even Mr. Dusautoy called the one 'that foolish fellow,' and the other 'poor dear Lucy?'

Albinia and Sophy sat over the fire that evening, after their sorrowful tasks unable to turn to anything else, wondering how and when they should meet again, and their words coming slowly, and with long intervals of silence.

'Dear child,' said Albinia, 'promise me to take care of yourself, and to let Mrs. Dusautoy judge what you can do.'

'I'm not worth taking care of,' muttered Sophy.

'We think you worth our anxiety,' said Albinia, tenderly.

'I will not make it worse for you,' meekly replied Sophy. 'I don't think I'm cross now; I could not be—'

'No, indeed you are not, my dear. We have leant on each other, and when we come home, you will make our welcome.'

‘The children will.’

‘Ah! I think Maurice will behave well. He is very much subdued. I told him he was to do no lessons, and he fairly burst out crying.’

‘Oh, mamma!’ exclaimed Sophy, hurt, indignant, and nearly ready to follow his example.

‘I do not think he has mastery over himself, so as to help being unruly and idle, when he is chained to a spelling-book. I would not for the world set him and you to worry each other for an hour a day; and I shall start afresh with him all the better, when he knows what absence of lessons is, and has forgotten all the old associations.’

‘How could you make him cry!’ said Sophy in reproach.

‘I believe the tears only wanted an excuse. I *did* put it on his naughtiness, which usually would have elated him; but his heart was so full as to make even a long holiday a punishment. That boy often shows me what a thorough Kendal he is; things sink into him as they never did into us at the same age, when my aunts used to think I had no feeling. Oh, Sophy! how will you comfort him?’

‘His will be an unstained sorrow,’ said Sophy, from the depths of her heart. ‘O, mamma, only tell Gilbert what you know I feel—no, you don’t, no one can; but what I would not give, to change all I have felt towards him? If I had been like Edmund, and prized his gentleness and sweetness, and the humility that was the best worth of all, how different it would be! But I was proud of despising where truth was wanting.’

‘I should have thought I should have done the same,’ said Albinia; ‘but there was no keeping from loving Gibbie. Besides, he was sincere, except when he was afraid; and he was miserable when he was deceiving.’

‘Yes, after you came,’ said Sophy; ‘but I believe I helped him to think truth disagreeable. I showed my scorn for his want of boldness, instead of helping him. Think of my having fancied *he* had no courage.’

‘Kindness taught him courage,’ said Albinia, ‘It

might perhaps have earlier taught him moral courage. If you and he could have leant against each other, and been fused together, you would have made something like what Edmund was, I suppose.'

'I drove him off,' cried Sophy. 'I was no sister to him. Will you bring me his forgiveness?'

'Indeed I will; and you may feel sure of it already, dearest. It will make you gentler all your life.'

'No; I shall grow harder and harsher the longer I live, and the fewer I have to love me in spite of myself.'

'I think not,' said Albinia. 'Humility will make your severity more gentle, and you will soften, and win love and esteem.'

She looked up, but cried, 'I shall never make up to Gilbert nor to grandmamma!'

Albinia felt it almost as hard to leave her as the two little ones.

When once on her journey, and feeling each movement an advance towards the goal, Albinia was less unhappy than she could have thought possible; she trusted to her brother, and enjoyed the absence of responsibility, and while he let her go on, could give her mind to what pleased and interested him; and he, who was an excellent courier, so managed that there were few detentions to overthrow her equanimity on the way to Marseilles.

But when the Vectis came in sight of the rocky isle, with its white stony heights, the heart-sickness of apprehension grew over her, and she saw as in a mist, the noble crescent-shaped harbour, the stately ramparts, mighty batteries, the lofty terraces of flat-roofed dwellings, apparently rather hewn out of, than built on, the dazzling white stone, between the intense blue of the sky above and of the sea below. Her eye roamed as in a dream over the crowds of gay boats with white awnings, and the motley crowds of English and natives, the boatmen screaming and fighting for the luggage, and beggars plaintively whining out their entreaties for small coins. Her brother Maurice had been at Malta as a little boy, and remembered the habits of the place enough, as soon as they had set foot on shore, to secure a brown-skinned

loiterer, in Phrygia cap, loose trousers, and crimson sash, to act as guide and porter.

Along the Strada San Giovanni, a street of stairs, shut in by high stone walls, with doors opening on either side, they went not as fast as Albinia's quivering limbs would fain have moved, yet too fast when her breath came thick with anxiety—down again by the stone stairs called '*Nix Mangiare*' (nothing to eat), from the incessant cry of the beggars that haunt them—then again in a boat which carried them amid a strange world of shipping to the bottom of the dockyard creek, where, again landing, she was told she had but to ascend, and she would be at Bormola.

She could have paused, in dread; and she leant heavily on her brother's arm when they presently turned up a lane, no broader than a passage, with low stone steps at irregular intervals. They were come!

The summons at the door was answered by a dark-visaged Maltese, and while Maurice was putting the question whether Colonel Ferrars and Captain Kendal lived here, a figure appeared on the stairs, and beckoned, ascending noiselessly with languid steps and slippered feet, and leading the way into a slightly furnished room, with green balcony and striped blind. There he turned and held out his hand; but Albinia hardly recognised him till he said, 'I thought I heard your voice, Maurice;' and then the low subdued tone together with the gaunt wasted form, haggard aged face, the long beard, and worn undress uniform, with the armless sleeve, made her so realize his sufferings, that, clasping his remaining hand in both her own, she could utter nothing but, 'Oh! Fred! Fred!'

He looked at her brother with such inquiry, perplexity, and compassion, that almost in despair Maurice exclaimed, 'We are not too late!'

'No, thank God!' said Frederick. 'We did hope you might come! Sit down, Albinia; I'll—'

'Edmund—? Is he there,' she said, scarcely alive to what was passing; and casting another expressively sor-

rowful look at Maurice, Fred answered, 'Yes, I will tell him : I will see if you can come in.'

'Stay,' said Mr. Ferrars ; 'she should compose herself, or she will only hurt herself and Gilbert.'

'I don't know,' murmured Fred, hastily leaving them.

Maurice understood that Gilbert was even then summoned by one who would brook no delays ; but Albinia, too much agitated to notice slight indications, was about to follow, when her brother took her hand, and checked her like a child. 'Wait a minute, my dear, he will soon come back.'

'Where's Edmund ? Why mayn't I go to Gilbert ?' she said, still bewildered.

'Fred is gone to tell them. Sit down, my dear ; take off your bonnet ; you are heated ; you will be better able to go to him if you are quiet.'

She passively submitted to be placed on a chair, and to remove her bonnet ; and seeing some dressing apparatus through an open door, Maurice brought her some cold water to refresh her burning face. She looked up with a smile, herself again. 'There, thank you, Maurice : I won't be foolish now.'

'God support you, my dear !' said her brother, for the longer the Colonel tarried, the worse were his forebodings.

'Perhaps the doctor is there,' she proceeded. 'That will be well. Ask him everything, Maurice. But oh ! did you ever see any one so much altered as poor Fred ! He looks twenty years older ! Ah ! I am quite good now ! I may go now !' she cried, as the door opened.

But as Frederick returned there was that written on his brow, which lifted her out of the childishness of her agitation.

'My dear Albinia,' he said in a trembling voice, 'Mr. Kendal cannot leave him to come to you. He has been much worse since last night ;' and as her face showed that she was gathering his meaning, he pursued in a lower and more awe-struck tone : 'We think he is sensible, but we cannot tell. It could not hurt him for

you to come in, and perhaps he may know you ; but are you able to bear it ? Is she, Maurice ?'

'Yes, I am,' she answered ; and the calm firmness of her tone proved that she was a woman again. Her hand shook less than did that of her cousin, as silently and reverently he took it, and led her into another room on the same floor.

There, in the subdued light, she saw her husband, seated on the bed, holding in his arms his son, who lay lifted up and supported upon his breast, with his head resting on his shoulder, and eyes closed. There was no greeting, no sound save the long, heavily drawn, gasping breaths. Mr. Kendal raised his eyes to her ; she silently knelt down and took the wasted hand that lay helplessly on the coverlet, but it moved feebly from her as though harassed by the touch.

'Gilbert, dear boy,' said his father, earnestly, 'she is come ! Speak to him, Albinia.'

She hardly knew her own voice as she said, 'Gilbert, Gibbie dear, here I am.'

Those large brown eyes were shown for a few moments beneath the heavy lids, and met hers. The mouth, hitherto only gasping for air, endeavoured to form a word ; the hand sought hers. She kissed him, and his eyes opened wide and brightened, while he said, 'I think it is pardon now.'

'Pardon indeed !' said his father, with a greater look of relief than Albinia understood ; 'you are resting in His merits.'

Gilbert's look brightened, and he said, 'I know it now.'

'Thank God,' said Mr. Kendal.

His eyes closed, and Fred whispered to the father, 'Maurice is here too.'

Again the light awoke in the eye, with almost a smile, the look that always welcomed the little brother ; and Albinia grieved to say, 'Not little Maurice, though he longed to come ; it is my brother.' But the air of eagerness did not pass away, and he seemed satisfied when Mr. Ferrars came in. It was as a priest, speaking words not

his own ; and Albinia and Fred knelt with him. At the close of each prayer or psalm, Gilbert signed imploringly for more, even like our mighty dying queen ; and at each short pause, the distressed agonized expression would again contract the brow, though in the sound of the holy words all was peace. The Psalm of the Good Shepherd with the Rod and Staff in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, recurred so strongly to Maurice, that he repeated it like a cadence after each penitential supplication, every time bringing a look of peace to the countenance of the sufferer.

They must have remained long thus, Fred had grown exhausted with kneeling and had been forced to sit on the floor, and Maurice's voice waxed low and hoarse ; yet he durst not pause, though doubting whether Gilbert could follow the meaning. At length the eyes were again raised. With a start as of haste, Gilbert looked full at Albinia, and said, 'Thank you. Tell Maurice—' He could not finish, and there was an agony for breath ; then as his father raised him, he contrived to say, 'Father—mother—kiss me ; it is forgiven !'

Another look brought Fred to press his hand, and he smiled his thanks.

There were a few more terrible minutes, from which they would fain have led away Albinia, but suddenly his brow grew smooth, his eyes were eagerly fixed as on something before him, and as if replying to a call, he said, 'Yes !' with a start and a quiver of all his limbs, and then—

The first words were Mr. Kendal's. 'Edmund has come for him !'

It was to the rest as if the father had been in some manner conscious of the presence of the one twin-brother, and were resigning the other to his charge, for he calmly kissed the forehead, closed the eyes, laid down the form he had so long held in his arms, and after a few moments on his knees, with his face hidden in his hands, he rose with composure, and said to his wife, 'I am glad you were in time.'

Had he given way, Albinia would have been strong ;

but there was no need of support to counteract the force of disappointment and grief, acting upon overwrought spirits, and a fatigued, exhausted frame. Were these half-conscious looks and broken words all she had come for, all she should ever have of Gilbert? This was the moment's predominant sensation; she was past thinking; and though she still controlled herself, she cast a wild, piteous eye on her husband, and as he lifted her up, she sank on his breast, not fainting, not sobbing, but utterly prostrated, and needing all his support as he led her out, and laid her on a couch in the next room, speaking softly as if hoping his voice would restore her. 'We had some faint hope of you; we knew you would wish it, so you see all is ready. But you have done too much, my dear; Maurice should not have let you travel so fast.'

'No, no,' said Albinia, catching her breath. 'Oh! not to have come sooner!' and she gave way to a violent burst of tears, during which he fondled and soothed her, till she suddenly said, 'I did not come here to behave in this way! I came to help you! Edmund, what shall I do?' and she would have started up.

'Only lie still, and let me take care of you,' said he. 'Nothing could be to me like your coming;' and she was forced to believe his glistening eyes and voice of tenderness.

'Can you keep quiet a little while,' said Mr. Kendal, wistfully, 'while I go to speak to your brother? It was very good in him to come! Don't speak; I will come back directly.'

She did lie still, for she was too much spent to move, and the silence was good for her; for if the overwhelming sensation of grief would sweep over her, on the other hand, there was the remembrance of the look of peace, and the perception that her husband was not as yet so struck to the earth as she had feared. He was not long in returning, bringing some coffee for her and for himself, and speaking with the same dreamy serenity, though looking excessively pale. 'Your brother told me to give you this,' he said. 'I am glad the Colonel is under

such care, for he is terribly distressed and not at all fit to bear it. I could not make him go to bed all last night.'

'You were up all last night, and many nights before,' said Albinia; 'and all alone! Oh! why was I not here to help!'

'Fred was a great comfort,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I cannot describe my gratitude to him. And dearest—' He paused, and added with hesitation, 'I do not now regret the having come out alone. After the first disappointment, I think that my boy and I learnt to know each other better. If he had left me nothing but the recollection that I had been too severe and unsympathizing to win his confidence, I hardly know how I could have borne it.'

'He was able to talk to you, then?' cried Albinia. 'That was what I always wished! Yes, it *was* right, so it came right. I had got between you as I ought not to have done, and it was well you should have him to yourself.'

'Not as you ought not,' he fondly answered. 'You always were his better angel, and you came at last as a messenger of peace. There was relief and hope from the moment that he knew you.'

He told her what could scarcely have passed his lips save in those earlier hours of affliction. It had been a time of grievous mental distress. Neither natural temperament nor previous life had been such as to arm poor Gilbert to meet the King of Terrors; and as day by day he felt the cold grasp tightening on him, he had fluttered like a bird in the snare of the fowler, physically affrighted at the death-pang, shrinking from the lonely entrance into the unknown future, and despairing of the acceptableness of his own repentance. He believed that he had too often relapsed, and he could not take heart to grasp the hope of mercy and rest in the great atonement. The last Communion had been melancholy, the contrite spirit unable to lift itself up, and apparently only sunk the lower by the weight of love and gratitude, deepening the sense of how much had been disregarded. There had since been a few hopeful gleams, but dimmed by bodily suffering and terror; and doubly mournful had been the weary

hours of the night and morning, while he lay gasping away his life upon his father's breast. Having at first taken the absence of his step-mother as a sign that she had not forgiven him, he had only laid aside this notion for a more morbid fancy that the deprivation was a token of wrath from above; and there could be little doubt that her final appearance was hailed as a seal of pardon not merely from her. Her brother, who had raised him up after his last fall, was likewise the person above all others to bring the message of mercy to speed him to the Unseen, where, as his look and gesture had persuaded his father, his brother, or some yet more blessed one, had received and welcomed the frail and trembling spirit.

That last farewell, that dawn of peace, so long prayed for, so ardently desired, had given Mr. Kendal such thankfulness and relief as sustained him, and enabled him to support his wife, who knew not how to meet her first home grief; whereas to him sorrow had long been a household guest more familiar than joy; and he was more at rest about his son than he had been for many a year. He could dwell on him together with Edmund, instead of connecting him with shame, grief, and pain; though how little could he have borne to think that thus it would end, when in the springtime of his manhood he had rejoiced over his beautiful twin boys.

He knew his son better than heretofore. After the first day's disappointment, Gilbert had found him all-sufficient, and had rested on his tenderness. All sternness had ceased on one side, all concealment on the other, and the sweetness of both characters had had full scope. Gilbert's ardent love of home had shown itself in every word, and his last exertion had been to write a long letter to his little brother, which had been completed and despatched by a private hand a few days previously. He had desired that Maurice should have his sword, and mentioned the books which he wished his sisters to share, talking of Sophy as one whom he honoured much, and wished he had known better; but much pained by hearing nothing from Lucy, and lamenting his share in her union with Algernon. He had said something about his wish

that the alms-houses should be built, but his father had turned away the subject, knowing that in case of his dying intestate and unmarried, the property was settled on the sisters, and seeing little chance of any such work being carried out with the co-operation of Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy. Latterly he had spoken of G  nevi  ve Durant; he knew better how unworthy of her he had been, and how harassing his pursuit must have appeared; but he could not help entreating that her pardon might be asked in his name, that she might hear that he had loved her to the last, and above all, that his father would never lose sight of her; and Mr. Kendal's promise to regard her as the next thing to his daughters had been requited with a look of the utmost gratitude and affection.

This was the substance of what Mr. Kendal told his wife as they sat together, unwitting of the lapse of time, and shrinking from any interruption that might mar their present peace and renew the sense of bereavement.

Mr. Ferrars was the first to knock at the door. He had been doing his utmost to spare both them and Fred, who needed all his care. These four months of mutual dependence had been even more endearing than the rescue of Fred's life on the battle-field; and he declared that Gilbert had done him more good than any one else. They had been so thrown together as to make the 'religious sentiment' of the younger tell upon the warm though thoughtless heart of the elder. They had been most fondly attached; and in his present state, reduced by wounds and exhausted by watching, Fred was more overpowered than those more closely concerned. He could hardly speak collectedly when an officer of the garrison called to consult him with regard to a military funeral; and it was for this that Maurice was obliged to refer to the father. There were indeed none of his regiment in the island, but there was a universal desire in the garrison to do honour to the distinguished young officer, for whom great interest had been felt; and the compliment brought a glow of exultation to Mr. Kendal's face, as he expressed his warm thanks, but desired that the decision might rest with Fred himself, as his son's lieutenant-colonel.

Maurice felt himself fully justified in his expedition when he found that all devolved on him, even writing to Sophy, and making the most necessary arrangements; for the Colonel was incapable of exertion, Albinia was prostrated by the shock, and Mr. Kendal appeared to be lulled into a strange calm by the effects of the excessive bodily weariness consequent on the exhausting attendance of the last few days. They all depended upon Mr. Ferrars, and recognised his presence as an infinite comfort.

In the morning Albinia came forth like one who had been knocked down and shattered, weary and gentle, and with the tears ever welling into her eyes, above all when she endeavoured to write to Sophy; and she showed her ordinary earnestness only when she entreated to see her boy once more. Her husband took her to look on the countenance settled into the expression of unearthly peace; but she was not satisfied; it was not her own Gilbert, boyish, sensitive, dependent, and shrinking. The pale brow, the marked manly features, the lower ones concealed by the brown moustache, belonged to the hero who had dared the deadly ride and borne his friend through the storm of shot and shell; the noble, settled, steadfast face was the face of a stranger, and gave her a thrill of disappointment. She gloried in the later Gilbert; but the last she had seen of him whom she loved for his weakness, had been when she had not heeded his farewell.

It made the pang the less when evening came and he was carried to his resting-place. They would have persuaded Frederick to spare himself, but as the only officer of the same corps, as well as for the sake of many closer ties, he would not hear of being absent, and made his cousin Maurice do his best to restore the smart soldierly air which he for the first time thought of regretting.

Gilbert's horse had perished at Balaklava, but his cap, sword, and spurs, were laid on the coffin, and from her shaded window Albinia watched it borne between the files of soldiers with arms reversed; and the procession of officers whose bright array contrasted with the Colonel's war-worn dress, ghastly cheek, and empty sleeve, tokens

of the reality of war amid its pageantry, as all moved slowly away to the deep tones of the solemn Dead March, music well befitting the calm grandeur of the face she had seen, and leaving her heart throbbing with the deep exulting awe and pathos of a soldier's funeral. She knelt alone, and followed the burial service in the stillness of the room overlooking the broad expanse of blue sea and sky; and by-and-by, through the window came the sound of the volley fired over the grave, the farewell of the army to the soldier at rest, his battles ended.

There was peace, and there was glory; but she could not divest herself of a sense of unreality. She could not feel as if it were really and truly Gilbert, and she were mourning for him. All was like a dream—that solemn military spectacle—the serene, grave sunshine on the fortress-harbour stretching its mailed arms into the sea—the roofs of the knightly old monastic city rising in steps from the bay crowded with white sails—and even those around her were different; her husband pale and still, as in a region above common life, and her cousin like another man, without his characteristic joyousness and insouciance. She could hardly induce herself, in her drowsy state, to believe that all was indeed veritable and tangible.

There was nothing to detain them at Malta, and Mr. Ferrars, who arranged everything, thought the calm of a sea voyage would be better for them all than the bustle and fatigue of a land journey.

‘Kendal himself does not care about getting home,’ he said to Fred, who was afraid this was determined on his account. ‘I fear many annoyances are in store for him. His son-in-law will not be pleasant to deal with about the property.’

With an exclamation Fred started from the chairs on which he had been resting, and dived into his sabre-tasch which hung from the wall. ‘I never liked to begin about it,’ he said; ‘but I ought to have given them this. It was done when he was so bad at Scutari. One night he worked himself into a fever lest he should not live till his birthday, and said a great deal about this Dusautoy mak-

ing himself an annoyance, perhaps insisting on a sale and turning his father out. Nothing pacified him till, the very day he was of age, we got the vice-consul to draw up what he wanted, and witness it, and so did I and the doctor; and here it is. Afterwards he warned me to say nothing of it when Mr. Kendal came, for he said if the other fellow made a row, it would be better his father should be able to say he had known nothing of the matter.'

'Does he make his father his heir?'

'That's the whole of it. He said his sisters would see it was the only way to get things even, and I was to tell Albinia something about building cottages or almshouses. Ay, "his father was to do what ought to have been done."'

'Well, there's the best deed of poor Gilbert's life!'

'Thank you,' mumbled Fred, half drolly, half gravely.

'Ay, Kendal and Albinia will do more good with that property than you have thought of in all your life, sir.'

'Their future and my past,' laughed Fred, adding more gravely, 'Scamp as I am, there's more responsibility coming on me now, and I have gone through some preparation for it. If I can get out to Canada—'

'You will not lessen your responsibilities,' said Maurice, smiling, 'nor your competency to meet them.'

'I *trust* not,' said Fred.

Mr. Ferrars read in his countenance far more than was implied by those words. The General, by treating him as a boy, had kept him one, and perhaps his levity had been prolonged by the rejection of his first love; but a really steady attachment had settled his character, and he had been undergoing much training through his own sufferings, Gilbert's illness, and the sense of the new position that awaited him as commanding officer; and for the first time Maurice, who had always been very fond of him, felt that he was talking to a high-principled and right-minded man instead of the family pet and laughing-stock.

'I suppose,' he said, 'that you cannot have heard often from Montreal since you have been in the East.'

'No. If my letters are anywhere, it is at the Family Office. I desired them to be forwarded thither from head-quarters, not expecting to be detained here. But,' cried Fred with animation, 'what think you of the General actually writing to Mr. Kinnaird from Balaklava?'

'It would have been too bad if he had not.'

'I believe he did so solely to make me sleep, but it is the first time he has deigned to treat the affair as anything but a delusion, and he can't retract now. Since that, poor Gilbert has made a scrap or two of mine presentable, and there's all that I have been able to accomplish; but I hope it may have set their mind at rest.'

'Shall I be secretary?'

'Thank you, I think not. She would only worry herself about what is before me; and if the doctors let me off easy, I had rather report of myself in person.'

His eyes danced, and Maurice thought his unselfishness deserved a reward.

'My poor Gilbert's last secret,' said Mr. Kendal, as he laid before his wife the brief document by which his son had designated him as his sole heir and executor. 'A gift to you, and a trust to me.'

Albinia looked up for explanation.

'While he intrusts his sisters to my justice, he tacitly commends to me the works which you wished to see accomplished.'

'The almshouses! The improvements! Do you mean to undertake them?'

'It shall be my most sacred duty.'

'Oh! that we could have planned it with him!'

'Perhaps I value this the more from the certainty that it is spontaneous,' said Mr. Kendal. 'It showed great consideration and forethought, that he said nothing of his intention to me. Had he mentioned it, I should have thought it right to suggest his leaving his sisters their share; and yet, as we are situated with young Du-sautoy, it would have been awkward to have interfered. He did well and wisely to be silent.'

'You don't expect Algernon to be discontented. Impossible, at such a time, and so well off as he is!'

‘I wish it may be impossible.’

‘What do you mean to do?’

‘As far as I can see at present, I shall do this. I fear neither the mode of acquisition nor the management of that property was such as to bring a blessing, and I believe my poor boy has made it over to me in order to free his sisters from the necessity of winking at oppression and iniquity. Had it gone to them, matters must have been let alone till Sophia came of age, and even then, all improvements must have depended on Algernon’s consent. The land and houses we will keep, and sufficient ready money for the building and repairs; and to this, Sophia, at least, will gladly agree. The rest—something under twenty thousand, if I remember correctly—is the girls’ right. I will settle Lucy’s share on her so as to be out of her husband’s power, and Sophia shall have hers when she comes of age.’

‘I am sure that will take from Algernon all power of grumbling, though I cannot believe that even he could complain.’

‘You approve, then?’

‘How can you ask? It is the first thing that has seemed like happiness, if it did not make one long for him to talk it over!’ The wound was still very recent, and her spirits very tender, and the more she felt the blessing of the association with Gilbert in the work of love, the more she wept, though not altogether in sorrow.

Mortified at having come so much overworked and weakened as to occasion only trouble and anxiety, she yielded resignedly when forbidden to wear out strength and spirits by a visit to the burial-ground before her embarkation. She must content herself with Maurice’s description of the locality, and carry away in her eye only the general picture of the sapphire ocean and white rock fortress of the holy warriors vowed to tenderness and heroism, as the last resting place of her cherished Gilbert, when ‘out of weakness he had been made strong’ in penitence and love.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HAD Sophia's wishes been consulted, she would have preferred nursing her sorrows at home ; but no choice had been left, and at the vicarage the fatherly kindness of Mr. Dusautoy, and the considerate let-alone system of his wife, kept her at ease and not far from cheerful, albeit neither the simplicity of the one nor the keenness of the other was calculated to draw her into unreserve : comfort was in the children.

The children clung to her as if she made their home, little Albinia preferring her even to Uncle John, as he had insisted on being called ever since Lucy had become his niece, and Maurice invoking caresses, the bestowal of which was his mother's rare privilege. The boy was dull and listless, and though riot and mirth could be only too easily excited, his wildest shouts and most frantic gesticulations were like efforts to throw off a load at his heart. Time hung heavy on his hands, and he would lie rolling and kicking drearily on the floor, watching with some envy his little sister as she spelt her way prosperously through 'Little Charles,' or daintily and distinctly repeated her hymns. 'Nothing to do' was the burthen of his song, and with masculine perverseness he disdained every occupation suggested to him. Sophy might boast of his obedience and quiescence, but Mrs. Dusautoy pitied all parties, and wondered when he would be disposed of at school.

Permission to open letters had been left with Sophy, who with silent resignation followed the details of poor Gilbert's rapid decay. At last came the parcel by the private hand, containing a small packet for each of the family. Sophy received a silver Maltese Cross, and little Albinia a perfumy rose-leaf bracelet. There was a Russian grape-shot for Maurice, and with it a letter.

With childish secrecy, he refused to let any one look at so much as the envelope, and ran away with it, shouting, 'It's mine.' Sophy was grieved that it should be treated like a toy, and fearing that, while playing at im-

portance, he would lose or destroy it, without coming to a knowledge of the contents, she durst not betray her solicitude, lest she should give a stimulus to his wilfulness and precipitate its fate. However, when he had galloped about enough, he called imperatively, 'Sophy;' and she found him lying on his back on the grass, the black cat an unwilling prisoner on his chest.

'You may read it to Smut and me,' he said.

It bore date the day after his father's arrival, but it had evidently been continued at many different times; and as the handwriting became more feeble, the style grew more earnest, so that, but for her hoarse, indifferent voice, Sophy could hardly have accomplished the reading.

'My dear Maurice,

'Many, many thanks to you and dear little Awkey for your present. I have set it up like a picture, and much do I like to look at it, and guess who chose the colours and who are the hunters. I am sure the fat man in the red coat is the Admiral. It makes the place seem like home to see what tells so plainly of you and baby.

'Kiss my little Awk for me, and thank her for wanting to send me Miss Jenny, dear little maid; I like to think of it. You will not let her quite forget me. You must show her my name if it is put up in church, like Edmund's, and all the little ones'; and you will sometimes tell her about dear old Ned on a Sunday evening when you are both very good.

'I think you know that you and she will never again run out into the hall to pull Gibbie almost down between you. Perhaps by the time you read this, you will be the only son, with all the comfort and hope of the house resting upon you. My poor Maurice, I know what it is to be told so, and only to feel that one has no brother; but at least it cannot be to you as it was with me, when it was as if half myself were gone, and all my stronger, better, braver self.

'My father has been reading to me the Rich Man and Lazarus. Maurice, when you read of him and the five brethren, think of me; and how I pray that I may not have left seeds of temptation for you. In the time of my

loneliness, Tritton was good-natured, but I ought to have avoided him; and that to which he introduced me has been the bane of my life. Nothing gives me such anguish as to think I have made you acquainted with that set. Keep out of their way! Never go near those pigeon-shootings and donkey-races; they seem good fun, but it is disobedience to go, and the things that happen there are like the stings of venomous creatures; the poison was left to fester even when your mother seemed to have cured me. Neither now nor when you are older resort to such things or such people. Next time you meet Tritton and Shaw tell them I desired to be remembered to them; after that have nothing to do with them; touch your hat and pass on. They meant it in good nature, and thought no harm, but they were my worst enemies; they led me astray, and taught me deception as a matter of course. Oh! Maurice, never think it manly to have the smallest reserve with your parents. I would give worlds to have sooner known that truth would have been freedom and rest. Thank Heaven, your faults are not my faults. If you go wrong, it will be with a high hand, but you would wring hearts that can ill bear further grief and disappointment. Oh! that I were more worthy to pray that you may use your strength and spirit the right way; then you will be gladness to our father and mother, and when you lie down to die, you will be happier than I am.

‘I want to tell you more, but it hurts me to write long. If I could only see you—not only in my dreams. I wake, and my heart sickens with longing for a sight of my brave boy’s merry face, till I almost feel as if it would make me well; but it is a blessing past hope to have my father with me, and know him as I have never done before. Give little Albinia these beads, with my love, and be a better brother to her than I was to poor Lucy.

‘Good-by, Maurice. No one can tell what you have been to me since your mother put you into my arms, and I felt I had a brother again. God bless you and cancel all evil you may have caught from me. Papa will give you my sword. Perhaps you will wear it one day,

and under my colonel. I have never been so happy as in the time it was mine. When you look at it, always say this to yourself: "Fear God, and fear nothing else." O that I had done so!

'Let your dear, dear mother be happy in you: it will be the only way to make her forgive me in her heart. Good-by, my own dear, brave boy.'

'Your most affectionate brother,
'G. KENDAL.'

'I say, Smut,' quoth Maurice, 'I think you and our Tabby would make two famous horses for Awkey's little cart. I shall take you home and harness you.'

Sophy sat breathless at his indifference. 'You mustn't,' she said, in hasty anger; 'Smut is not yours.'

'Well, Jack said that our Tabby had two kittens up in the loft; I think they'll make better ponies. I shall go and try them!'

'Don't plague the kittens.'

'I'll not plague them; I'll only make ponies of them. Give me the letter.'

'No; not to play with the cats. I thought you would have cared about such a letter!'

'You have no right to keep it! It is mine; give it me!' cried Maurice, passionately.

'Promise to take real care of it.'

He only tore it from her, and was gone.

'I'm a fool to expect anything from such a child,' she thought.

At two o'clock the Vicar hurried into the bank. 'Good morning, Mr. Goldsmith; I beg your pardon; I wanted to ask if Mr. O'More has seen little Maurice Kendal.'

'Not since yesterday—what's the matter?'

'The child is not come in to dinner. He is nowhere at home or at Willow Lawn.'

'Ha!' cried Ulick. 'Can he be gone to see his pony at Hobbs's!'

'No; it has been sent to Fairmead. Then you have no notion where the child can be? Sophy is nearly dis-

tracted. She saw him last about ten o'clock, bent on harnessing some kittens, but he's not in the hay-loft !'

'He may be gone to the toy-shop after the harness. Or has anyone looked in the church-tower—he was longing to go up it, and if the door were open—'

'The very thing !' cried the Vicar. 'I'll go this moment.'

'Or there's old Peter, the sailor,' called Ulick ; 'if he wanted any tackle fitted, he might go to him.'

'You had better go yourself, More,' said Mr. Goldsmith. 'One would not wish to keep poor Miss Kendal in suspense, though I dare say the boy is safe enough.'

Mr. Goldsmith was thanked, and Ulick hurried out, Hyder Ali leaping up in amazement at his master being loose at that time of day.

Everybody had thought the child was with somebody else till dinner-time, and the state of the vicarage was one of dire alarm and self-reproach. Sophy was seeking and calling in every possible place, and had just brought herself to own the message of remembrance in Gilbert's letter, thinking it possible Maurice might have gone to deliver it at Robbles Leigh ; and Mr. Hope had undertaken to go thither in quest of him. Ulick and Mr. Dusautoy, equally disappointed by the tower and the sailor, went again to Willow Lawn to interrogate the servants. The gardener's boy had heard Maurice scolding and the cat squalling, and the cook had heard his step in the house. They hurried into his little room—he was not there, but the drawers had been disturbed.

'He may be gone to Fairmead !' cried the Vicar.

'How ?' said Ulick. 'Ha ! Hyder, sir !' holding up a little shoe. 'Seek ! That's my fine doggie—they only call you a mongrel because you have all the canine virtues united. See what you can do as sleuth hound. Ha ! We'll nose him out for you in no time, Mr. Dusautoy !'

After sniffing round the drawers, the yellow tripod made an ungainly descent of the stairs, his nose down all the way, then across the hall and out at the gate ; but when, after poking about, the animal set off on the turn-pike-road, the Vicar demurred.

'Stay; the poor dog only wants to get you out for a walk. He is making for the Hadminster road.'

'And why wouldn't he, if the child is nowhere in Bayford?'

'I can't answer it to his mother wasting time in this way. You may do as you like. I shall go to the training-stables, where he has once been, if not on to Fairmead. I can't see Sophy till he is found!'

'I shall abide by my little Orangeman,' said Ulick; and they parted.

Hyder Ali pursued his way in the March dust, while Ulick eagerly scanned for the traces of a child's foot. Four miles did the dog go on, evidently following a scent; but Ulick's mind misgave him as Hadminster church-tower rose before him, and the dog took the ascent to the station.

Ulick made his way in as a train stood panting before the platform. He had a glimpse of a square face and curly hair at the window of a second-class carriage.

'Maurice, come back!' he cried. 'Here, guard! this little boy must come back!'

'Go on!' shouted Maurice. 'I've got my ticket. No one can stop me. I'm going to Malta!' and he tried to get to the other side of a stout traveller, who defended his legs from him, and said, 'Ha! Running away from school, young master? Here's your usher.'

'No, I'm not running away! I'm not at school! I'm Maurice Kendal! I'm going to my brother at Malta!'

'He is the son of Mr. Kendal of Bayford,' said Ulick to the station-master; 'his parents are from home, and there will be dreadful distress if he goes in this way. Maurice, your sister has troubles enough already.'

'I've my ticket, and can't be stopped.'

But even as he spoke, the stout traveller picked him up by the collar, and dropped him like a puppy dog into Ulick's arms, just as the train was getting into motion; and a head protruded from every window to see the truant, who was pommelling Ulick in a violent fury, and roaring, 'Let me go; I will go to Gilbert!'

'Behave like a man,' said Ulick; 'don't disgrace yourself in that way.'

The boy coloured, choking with passion and disappointment, and straining against Ulick's hold of his shoulder.

'Indeed, sir,' said the station-master, 'if we had recognised the young gentleman, we would have made more inquiries; but he asked so readily for his ticket, not seeming at a loss, and we have so many young travellers, that we thought of nothing amiss. Will you have a fly, sir?'

'I'm not going home,' said the boy, undaunted.

'You must submit, Maurice. You do not wish to make poor Sophy miserable.'

'I must go to Malta,' the boy persisted. 'Gilbert says it would make him well to see me. I know my way; I saw it in the map; and I've a roll, and the end of a cold tongue, and a clean shirt, and my own sovereign, and four shillings, and a half-crown, and a half-penny, in my pocket, and I'm going!'

'But, Maurice, this gentleman will tell you that your whole sovereign would not carry you a quarter of the way to Malta.'

The station-master gave so formidable a description of the impossibilities of the route, that the hardy little fellow's look of decision relaxed into dejection, his muscles lost their tension, and he struggled hard with his tears.

He followed Ulick to the carriage, and hid his face in a corner, while orders were given to stop at the post-office in case there were fresh letters. There was one for Miss Kendal, in Mr. Ferrars' writing, and with black borders. Ulick felt too surely what it must be, and hardly could bear to address Maurice, who had shrunk from him with some remains of passion; but hearing suppressed sobs, he put his hand on him and said, 'My poor little man.'

'Get away,' said Maurice, shaking him off. 'Why did you come and bother?'

'I came because it would have almost killed your sister and mother for you to be lost. If you had seen Sophy's face, Maurice!'

'I don't care. Now I shall never see Gilbert again, and he did want me so!' Maurice hid his face, and his frame shook with sobs.

'Yes,' said Ulick, 'every one knew he wanted you; but if it had been possible for you to go, your mamma would have taken you. If your uncle had to take care of her how could you go alone?'

'I'd have got there somehow,' cried Maurice. 'I'd have seen and heard Gilbert. He's written me a letter to say he wants to see me, and I can't even make that out!'

'Has not your sister read it to you!'

'I hate Sophy's reading!' cried Maurice. 'It makes it all grumpy, like her. Take it, Ulick—you read it.'

That rich, sensitive, modulated voice brought out the meaning of the letter, though there were places where Ulick had nearly broken down; and Maurice pressed against him with the large tears in his eyes, and was some minutes without speaking.

'He does not think of your coming; he does not expect you, dear boy,' said Ulick. 'It is a precious letter to have. I hope you will keep it and read it often, and heed it too.'

'I can't read it,' said Maurice, ruefully. 'If I could, I shouldn't mind.'

'You soon will. You see how he tells you you are to be a comfort; and if you are a good boy, you'll quickly leave the dunce behind.'

'I can't,' said Maurice.

'Mamma said I should not do a bit of a lesson with Sophy, or I should tease her heart out. Would it come quite out?'

'Well, I think you have gone hard to try to-day,' said Ulick.

'Mamma said my being able to read would be a comfort, and papa says he never saw such an ignorant boy! so what's the use of minding Gilbert's letter? It won't let me.'

'What won't let you?'

'Fun!' said Maurice, with a sob.

'He is a rogue!' cried Ulick, vehemently; 'but a

stout heart and good will can get him under yet. Think of what your brother says of making your father and mother happy !'

'If I could do something to please them very, very much ! Oh ! if I could but learn to read all at once.'

'You can read—anybody can read !' said Ulick, pulling a book out of his pocket. 'There ! try.'

There was some laughing over this ; and then Maurice leant out of the window, and grew sleepy. They had descended into the wide basin of alluvial land through which the Baye dawdled its meandering course, and were just about to cross the first bridge about two miles from Bayford, when Maurice shouted, 'There's Sophy !—how funny.'

It was a tall figure, in deep mourning, slowly moving along the towing-path, intently gazing into the river ; but so strange was it to see Sophy so far from home, that Ulick paused a moment ere calling to the driver to stop.

As he hastily wrenched open the door, she raised up her face, and he was shocked. She looked as if she had lived years of sorrow, and even Maurice was struck with consternation.

'Sophy ! Sophy !' he cried, hanging round her. 'I wouldn't have gone without telling you, if I had thought you would mind it. Speak to me, Sophy !'

She could say nothing save a hoarse 'Where ?' as with both arms she pressed him as if she could never let him go again.

'In the train—intending to go to Malta,' said Ulick.

'I didn't know I could not ; I didn't mean to vex you, Sophy,' continued the child. 'I'm come home now, and I won't try again.'

'Oh ! Maurice, what would have become of you ?' She held out her hand to Ulick, the first time for months.

'And we've got a letter for you,' proceeded Maurice.

Ulick would fain have withheld it, but he had not the choice. She caught at it, still holding Maurice fast, and ere he could propose her opening it in the carriage while he walked home, she had torn it open, and the same moment she had sunk down, seated on the path, with an arm

round her brother. 'Oh! Maurice, it is well you are here! You would not have found them—it is over!'

She had found one brother to lose the other; but the relief of Maurice's safety had so softened the blow, that her tears gushed forth freely.

The sense of Ulick's presence restrained her; but raising her head, she missed him, and felt lonely, desolate, deserted, almost fainting, and in a strange place.

'Is he dead?' said Maurice, in a solemn low voice; and she wept helplessly, while the little fellow stood sustaining her weight like a small pillar, perplexed and dismayed.

'Are you poorly, Sophy? What shall I do?' said he, as she almost fell back; but a stronger arm held her up.

'Lean on me, dear Sophy,' said Ulick, who had returned, bringing some water from a small house near at hand, and supported her and soothed her like a brother.

The mists cleared away, the sense of desertion was gone, and she rose, but could not stand without his arm, and he almost lifted her into the carriage, where her appealing eye and helpless gesture made him follow her, and take Maurice on his knee. No one spoke; Maurice nestled close to his friend; awe-struck but weighed down by weariness and excitement. The blow had in reality been given when he was forced to relinquish the hope of seeing his brother again, and the actual certainty of his death fell with less comparative force. Perhaps he did not enter into the fact enough to ask for particulars. After a short space Sophy recovered herself enough to take out the letter, and read it over with greater comprehension.

'They were come!' she said.

'In time. I am glad.'

'In time to bring him peace, my uncle says! He knew mamma. I could never have borne it if I had deprived him of her.'

'Nor I,' said Ulick, from his heart. 'Did one but know the upshot of one's idle follies!'

Sophy looked towards Maurice.

'Asleep!' said Ulick. 'No wonder. He has walked four miles! He has a heart that might have been born in

Ireland ;' and as he looked at the fair young face softened and sweetened by sleep, 'What an infant it is to have even fancied such an undertaking!'

'Poor child!' sighed Sophy. 'He will never be the same!'

'Nay, grief at that age does not check the spirits for life.'

'You have never known,' said Sophy.

'No; our number has never yet been broken; but for this little man, I trust that the sense of duty may be deepened, and with it his love to you all; and surely that is not what will quench the blithe temper.'

'May it be so!' said Sophy. 'He may have enough of his mother in him to be happy.'

'I must think that the recollection of so loving a brother, and his pride in him for a hero, may make the stream flow more deeply, but not more darkly.'

'There never was a cloud between them,' said Sophy.

'Clouds are all past and gone now between those who can with him "take part in that thanksgiving lay,"' answered Ulick, kindly.

'Yes,' said Sophy. 'My uncle says it was peace at last! Oh! if humbleness and penitence could win it, one might be sure it would be his.'

'True,' said Ulick. 'It was a beautiful thing to find the loving sweetness and kindness refined into self-devotion and patience, and growing into something brighter and purer as it came near the last. It will be a precious recollection.'

'To those who have no self-reproach,' sighed Sophy; and after a pause she abruptly resumed, 'You once blamed me for being hard with him. Nothing was more true.'

'Impossible—when could I have presumed?'

'When? You remember. After Oxford.'

'Oh! you should not have let what I said dwell with you. I was a very raw Irishman then, and thought it barbarity to look cold on a little indiscretion; but I have learnt to think differently;' and he sighed. 'The severity that leads to repentance is truer affection than is shown by making light of foolishness.'

‘If it had been affection and not wounded pride.’

‘The dross has been refined away, if there were any,’ said Ulick. ‘You will be able to love him better now than ever you did in life.’

His comprehension met her half way, and gave her more relief and soothing than any thing she had experienced for months. There was that response and inter-communion of spirit for which her nature had yearned the more because of the inability to express the craving; the very turn of the dark blue eyes, and the inflexions of the voice, did not merely convey pity, but an entering into the very core of her sorrow, namely, that she had never loved her brother enough, nor forgiven him for not being his fellow-twin. Whatever he said tended to reveal to her that there had been more justice, rectitude, sisterly feeling, and wholesome training than she had given herself credit for, and, above all, that Gilbert had loved her all the time. She was induced to dwell on the exalting and touching circumstances of his last redeeming year, and her tears streamed calmly and softly, not with the harshness that had hitherto marred her grief. Neither could have believed that there had been so long and marked a separation in feeling, or that Ulick O’More had not always been one with the Kendal family. It was all too soon that the conversation ended, and Maurice awakened suddenly at the vicarage wicket. Mrs. Dusautoy herself came to meet them as the little boy was lifted out. She had never been seen on her own feet so far from the house before! But no one ever knew the terror she had suffered when of all her three charges not one was safe but the little Albinia, whose ‘poor Maurice’ and ‘all gone’ were as trying as her alternations of merriment. The vicar, the curate, the parish clerk, the servants of the two establishments, and four policemen, were all gone different ways; and poor Mrs. Dusautoy’s day had been spent in hearing the results of their fruitless researches, or in worse presages, in which, as it now appeared, the river had played its part.

She kissed Maurice, and he did not rebel! She kissed Sophy, and could have shaken off Ulick’s hand, but he

only waited to hold up Hyder Ali as the real finder, before he ran off to desire the school-bell to be rung—the signal for announcing a discovery. It was well that Maurice was too much stunned and fatigued to be sensible what a commotion he had excited, or he might have thought it good fun.

The tidings from Malta came in almost as something secondary. The case had been too hopeless for anything else to be looked for; and when Mrs. Dusautoy consigned her charge to a couch, with entreaties to her not to move, there was calm tenderness in Sophy's voice as she told what needed to be told, and did not shrink from sympathy. She was grateful and gentle, and lay all the rest of the day, sad and physically worn out, but quietly mournful, and no longer dwelling on the painful side of past transactions; her remorse had given way to resigned acquiescence, and desolation to a sense that there was one who understood her. The sweet tones, and, above all, those two words, '*dear Sophy,*' would come chiming back from some involuntary echo, and the turbid depths were at peace.

When Mr. Dusautoy came to her side, and held out his hand, his honest eyes brimming over, there was no repulsion in her manner of saying affectionately, 'You have had a great deal of trouble for my naughty little brother.' So different was her whole tone, that her kind friends thought how much better for some minds was any certainty than suspense. She bethought herself of sending to the Drurys, and showed rather gratification than her ordinary impatience at the manifold reports of the general sympathy, and of Bayford's grief for its hero. The poison was gone from her mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE Family Office had been asked to receive the whole party on their return. Mr. Kendal had business in London, and could not bear to part with the Colonel till he had seen him safely lodged, and heard the surgeon's opinion.

Mr. Ferrars was laying himself out to guard his brother-in-law from being oppressed by the sympathetic welcome of the good aunts; but though the good ladies never failed in kindness, all the excess was directed into a different channel; Albinia herself was but secondary to the wounded hero, for whom alone they had eyes and ears. They would hardly let him stand erect for a moment; easy-chairs and couches were offered, soup and wine, biscuits and coffee were suggested, and questions were crowded on him, while he, poor fellow, wistfully gazed at the oft-directed pile of foreign letters on the side-table, and in pure desperation became too fatigued to go down to luncheon.

When the others returned, he was standing on the rug, curling his moustaches. There was a glow of colour on his hollow cheek, and his eyes danced; he put out his hand, and catching Albinia's with boyish playfulness, he squeezed it triumphantly, with the words, 'Albinia, she's a brick!'

They went their several ways, Fred to rest, Maurice to make an appointment for him with the doctor, and Albinia to G  nevi  ve, whom Mr. Kendal regarded like his son's widow, forgetting that the attachment had been neither sanctioned nor returned. He could not rest without seeing her, and delivering that last message, but he was glad to have the way prepared by his wife, and proposed to call for her when his law business should be over.

Albinia sent in her card, and asked whether Miss Durrant were at liberty. G  nevi  ve came hurrying to her with outstretched hands; 'Dear Mrs. Kendal, this is kind!' and led her to the back drawing-room, where they were with one impulse enfolded in each other's tearful embrace.

‘Oh! madame, how much you have suffered!’

‘You know all?’ said Albinia.

‘O no, very little. My aunt knows little of Bayford now, and her sight is too weak for much writing.’

Géneviève pushed back her hair; she looked ill and heavy-eyed, with the extinguished air that sorrow gave her. Gilbert had distressed, perplexed her, and driven her from home; but what could be remembered, save the warm affection he had lavished on her, and the pain she had inflicted? Uneasiness and sorrow, necessarily unavowed, had preyed on the poor girl for weeks in secret; and even now she hardly presumed to give way, relief, almost luxury, as it was to be pressed in those kind arms, and suffered to weep freely for the champion of her younger days. When she had heard how he had thought of her to the last, her emotion grew less controllable; and Albinia was touched by the idea that there had all along been a stifled preference. Embellished as Gilbert now was, she could not but wish to believe that his affection had not been wasted; and his constancy might well be touching in one of the heroes of the six hundred. At least, Géneviève had a most earnest and loving appetite for every detail, and though the afternoon was nearly gone, neither felt as if half an hour had passed when admittance was asked for Mr. Kendal.

It was a trying moment, but Géneviève was too simple, genuine, and grateful to pause in selfish embarrassment. Had she toyed with Gilbert’s affection, she could not have met his father with such maidenly modesty, and sweet sympathy and respect in her blushing cheek and downcast, tearful eyes.

He took her hand, speaking in the kindest tone of his mellow voice; ‘My dear, Mrs. Kendal has told you what brings us here, and how much we feel for and with you.’

‘So kind in you,’ said Géneviève, faltering.

‘Poor child, she has suffered grievously for want of fuller tidings,’ said Albinia; ‘she has been keeping her sorrow pent up all this time.’

‘She has acted, as she has done throughout, most consistently,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘My dear, though it was in-

expedient to show my sentiments, I always respected my son for having placed his affections so worthily; and though circumstances were unfortunately adverse, I cannot thank you enough for your course of action and the influence you exercised.'

'I never did,' murmured G  n  vi  ve.

'Not perhaps consciously; but unswerving rectitude of conduct is one of the strongest earthly influences. He was sensible of it. He bade me tell you that whenever higher and better thoughts came to him, you were connected with them; and when to his surprise, poor boy, he found that he was thought to have distinguished himself, his first thought was that it might be a step to your esteem. He desired me to thank you for all that you have been to him, to entreat you to pardon the annoyance of which he was the occasion, and to beg you to wear this for his sake, if you could think of his presumption with forgiveness and toleration. Those were his words; but I trust you do not retain displeasure, for though, perhaps, foolishly and obtrusively expressed, it was sincere and lasting affection.'

'Oh, sir!' exclaimed G  n  vi  ve, 'do not speak thus! What can I feel save that it will be my tenderest and deepest pride to have been so regarded. Oh! that I could thank him! but,' clasping her hands together, 'I cannot even thank you.'

'The best way to gratify us,' he said, 'will be always to remember that you have a home at Willow Lawn, and a daughter's place in our hearts. Think of me like a father, G  n  vi  ve;' and he kissed her drooping forehead.

'Oh! Mr. Kendal, this is goodness.'

He turned to Albinia to suggest, 'It must be intolerable to be here at present. Speak to Mrs. Rainsforth; let us take her home, if it be but for a week.'

Leaving him to make the proposition to G  n  vi  ve, Albinia gained admittance to the other drawing-room, which she found all over little children, and their mother looking unequal to dispensing with their deputy. She said she had feared Miss Durant was looking ill, and had something weighing on her spirits, though she was always

so cheerful and helpful ; but baby had not been well, and Mr. Rainsforth was not at all strong, and her views had evidently taken no wider range.

Albinia began to think her proposal cruel, and prefaced it by a few words on the state of the case. The little bit of romance touched the kind heart. Mrs. Rainsforth was shocked to think of the grief the governess must have suffered in secret while aiding to bear her burdens, and was resolved on letting her have this respite, going eagerly to assure her that she could well be spared ; baby was better, and papa was better, and the children would be good.

But G  nevi  ve knew too well how necessary she was, and had been telling Mr. Kendal of the poor little mother's anxieties with her many delicate children, and her husband's failing health. She could not leave them with a safe conscience ; and she would not show how she longed after quiet, the country, and her aunt. She stood firm, and Albinia could not say that she was not right. Mrs. Rainsforth was distressed, though much relieved, and was only pacified by the engagement that Miss Durant should, when it was practicable, spend a long holiday with her friends.

'At home !' said Mr. Kendal ; and the responsive look of mournful gratitude from beneath the black dewy eyelashes dispelled all marvel at his son's enduring attachment.

He was wonderfully patient when Mrs. Rainsforth could not be content without Mrs. Kendal's maternal and medical opinion of the baby, on the road to and from the nursery consulting her on all the Mediterranean climates, and telling her what each doctor had said of Mr. Rainsforth's lungs, in the course of which Miss Durant and her romance were put as entirely out of the little lady's mind as if she had never existed.

The next day the Kendals set their faces homewards, leaving Maurice till the surgeon's work should be done, and Fred, as the aunts fondly hoped, to be their nursling.

But, behold ! Sunday and Monday Colonel Fred spent in bed, smiling incessantly ; Tuesday and Wednesday on

the sofa; Thursday in going about London; Friday he was off to Liverpool; Saturday had sailed for Canada.

Albinia was coming nearer to the home that was pulling her by the heart-strings. Hadminster was past, and she had heard the welcome words, 'All well,' from the servant who brought the carriage; but how much more there was to know than Sophy's detailed letters could convey—Sophy, whose sincerity, though one of the most trustworthy things in the world, was never quite to be relied on as to her own health or Maurice's conduct.

At the gate there was a little chestnut curled being in a short black frock, struggling to pull the heavy gate open with her plump arms, and standing for one moment with her back to it, screaming 'Mamma! Papa!' then jumping and clapping her hands in ecstasy and oblivion that the swing of the gate might demolish her small person between it and the horse. But there was no time for fright. Sophy caught her and secured the gate together; and the first glimpse assured Albinia that the hard gloom was absent. And there was Maurice, leaning against the iron rail of the hall steps; but he hardly moved, and his face was so strangely white and set, that Albinia caught him in her arms, crying, 'Are you well, my boy? Sophy, is he well?'

'Quite well,' said Sophy; but the boy had wriggled himself loose, stood but for an instant to receive his father's kiss, and laid hold of the sword. The long cavalry sabre was almost as tall as himself, and he stood with both arms clasped round it; but no sooner did he feel their eyes upon him, than he turned about and ran upstairs.

It was not gracious, but they excused it; they had their little Albinia comfortably and childishly happy, as yet without those troublesome Kendal feelings that always demonstrated themselves in some perverse manner.

And Sophy stood among them—that brighter, better Sophy who had so long been obscured, happy to have them at home; talking and asking questions eagerly about the journey, and describing the kindness of the Dusautoys and the goodness of the children.

'Have you heard from Lucy?' asked Mr. Kendal, as Albinia went in pursuit of her little boy.

'Yes—poor Lucy!'

'Is there no letter from him?'

'Not for you, papa.'

'What? Did he write to his uncle?'

'No, papa—he wrote to me and to Mr. Pettilove. Cannot he be stopped, papa? Can he do any harm? Mr. Dusautoy and Mr. Pettilove think he can.'

'You mean that he wishes to question the will? You may be quite secure, my dear. Nothing can be more safe.'

'Oh, papa! I am so very glad. Not to be able to hinder him was so dreadful, when he wanted to pit Lucy and me against you. I could never have looked at you. I should always have felt that you had something to forgive me.'

'I could not well have confounded you with Algernon, my dear,' said Mr. Kendal. 'What did Pettilove mean? Do you know?'

'Not exactly; something about grandpapa's old settlement; which frightened the Vicar, though Mrs. Dusautoy said that it was only that he fancied nobody could do anything right without his help. Mr. Dusautoy is more angry with Algernon than I thought he could be with anybody.'

'No one but Algernon would have ever thought of it,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I am sorry he has molested you, my dear. Have you any objection to let me see his letter?'

'I kept it for you, papa, and a copy of my answer. I thought, though I am not of age, perhaps my saying I would have nothing to do with it might do him some good.'

Algernon magniloquently condoled with his sister-in-law on the injustice from which she and her sister had suffered, in consequence of the adverse influence which surrounded her brother; and generously informed her that she had a champion to defeat the machinations against their rights. He had little doubt of the futility

of the document, and had written to the legal adviser of the late Mr. Meadows to inquire whether the will of that gentleman did not bar any power on the part of his grandson to dispose of the property. She might rely on him not to rest until she should be put in possession of the estate, unless it should prove to have been her grandfather's intention, in case of the present melancholy occurrence, that the elder sister should be the sole inheritrix; and he congratulated her on having such a protector, since, under the unfortunate circumstances, the sisters would have had no one to uphold their cause against their natural guardian.

Sophy's answer was—

'Dear Algernon,

'I prefer my *natural guardian* to any other whatever. I shall for my part owe you no thanks for attempting to frustrate my dear brother's wishes, and to raise an unbecoming dissension. I desire that no use of my name may be made, and you may rest assured that I should find nothing so difficult to forgive as any such interference in my behalf.

'Yours truly,

'SOPHIA KENDAL.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Kendal, 'no family ill-will is complete unless money matters be brought in to aggravate it.'

'Do you think I did right, and spoke strongly enough, papa?'

'Quite strongly enough,' said Mr. Kendal, suppressing a smile. 'I hope you wrote kindly to Lucy at the same time.'

'One could not help that, papa; but I did say a great deal about the outrageous impropriety of raising the question, because I thought Algernon might be ashamed.'

'Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt,' said Mr. Kendal. 'Your grandfather's acquisitions have brought us little but evil hitherto; and now I fear that our dear Gilbert's endeavour to break the net which bound us into that system of iniquity and oppression, may cause alienation from poor Lucy. Sophy, you must

allow no apparent coldness or neglect on her part to keep you from writing often and affectionately.'

Maurice here came down with his mother, and as soon as there was a moment's pause, laid hold of the first book he met with, and began :—

'I do not see the justice of the analogy to which Onuphrio refers, but there are many parts of that vision on which I should wish to hear the explanations of Philalethes.'

All broke out in amazement, 'Why, Maurice, has Mrs. Dusautoy been making a scholar of you?'

'Oh! Maurice, was this your secret?' cried Sophy.

He had hidden his face in his mother's lap, and when she raised it, struggled to keep it down, and she felt him sobbing and panting for breath. Mr. Kendal stroked his hair, and they tried to soothe him, but he started up abruptly.

'I don't mean ever to be a plague again! So I did it. But there—when Ulick said it would be a comfort, you are all going to cry again, papa and all, and that's worse!' and stamping his foot passionately, he would have rushed out of the room, but was held fast in his father's arms, and indeed tears were flowing fast from eyes that his brother's death had left dry.

'My child! my dear child!' said Mr. Kendal, 'it is comfort. No one can rule you as by God's grace you can rule yourself, and your endeavours to do this are the greatest blessing I can ask.'

One more kiss from his mother, and she let him go. He did not know how to deal with emotion in himself, and hated the sight of it in others; so that it was better to let him burst away from them, while with one voice they admired, rejoiced, and interrogated Sophy.

'I know now,' she said, the rosy glow mantling in her cheek; 'it must have been Mr. O'More.'

'Ah! has he been with you?' said her father.

'Only once,' said Sophy, her colour deepening; 'but Maurice has been in a great hurry every day to go to him, and I saw there was some secret. One day, Susan asked me to prevent Master Maurice from teaching baby

such ugly words, that she could not sleep—not bad words, but she thought they were Latin. So I watched, and I heard Maurice singing out some of the legend of Hiawatha, and insisting on poor little Awkey telling him what m-i-s-h-e-n-a-h-m-a, spelt. Poor little Awk stared, as well she might, and obediently made the utmost efforts to say after him, Mishenahma, king of fishes, but he was terribly discomposed at getting nothing but Niffey-ninny, king of fithes. I went to her rescue, and asked what they were about; but Maurice thundered down on me all the Delawares and Mohawks, and the Choctaws and Camanches; and baby squeaked after him as well as she could, till I fairly stopped my ears. I thought Ulick must be reading the legend to him. Now I see he must have been teaching him to read it.’

‘Can it be possible?’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘He could not read words of five letters without spelling.’

‘He always could do much more when he pleased than when he did not please,’ said Albinia. ‘I believe the impulse to use his understanding was all that was wanting, and I am very glad the impulse came from such a motive.’

Mr. Kendal ordained that Maurice’s reward should be learning Latin from himself, a perilous trial; but it proved that Mr. Kendal was really a good teacher for a child of spirit and courage, and Maurice had early come to the age when boys do better with man than with woman. He liked the honour and the awe of papa’s tutorship, and learnt so well, that his father never believed in his past dunceship; but over studies that he did not deem sufficiently masculine, he could be as troublesome as ever, his attention absent, and his restlessness most wearisome. To an ordinary eye, he was little changed; but his mother felt that the great victory of the will had been gained, and that his *self* was endeavouring to get the better of the spirit of insubordination and mischief. Night after night she found him sleeping with the Bala-klava sword by his side, and his hand clasped over it; and he always crept out of the way of Crimean news, though that he gathered up the facts was plain when he

committed his sovereign to Ulick, with a request that it might be devoted to the comforts preparing to be sent to the 25th Lancers.

Ulick wished him to consult his mother, but this he repelled. He could not endure the sight of a tear in her eye, and she could not restrain them when that chord was touched. It was a propensity she much disliked, the more because she thought it looked like affectation beside Sophy, whose feelings never took that course; but the more ill-timed the tears, the more they would come, at the most common-place condolence or remote allusion. It was the effect of the long strain on her powers, and the severe shock coming suddenly after so much pressure and fatigue; moreover, her habits had been so long disorganized that her time seemed blank, and she could not rouse herself from a feeling of languor and depression. Then Gilbert had been always on her mind, whether at home or absent; and it did not seem at first as if she had enough to fill up time or thoughts—she absolutely found herself doing nothing, because there was nothing she cared to do.

Mr. Kendal's first object was the fulfilment of Gilbert's wishes; but Albinia soon felt how much easier it is for women and boys to make schemes, than for men to bring them to effect, and how rash it is hastily to condemn those who tolerate abuses.

The whole was carefully looked over with a surveyor, and it was only then understood how complicated were the tenures, and how varied the covenants of the numerous small tenements which old Mr. Meadows had amassed. It was not possible to be free of the legal difficulties under at least a year, and plans of drainage might be impeded for want of other people's consent. Even if all had been smooth, the sacrifice of income, by destroying Tibbs's Alley, and reducing the number of cottages, would be considerable. Meantime, the inspection had brought to light worse iniquities and greater wretchedness than Mr. Kendal had imagined, and his eagerness to set to work was tenfold. His table was heaped with sanitary re-

ports, and his fits of abstraction were over the components of bad air or builder's estimates.

It only depended on Ulick to have resumed his intimacy at Willow Lawn; but the habit once broken was not resumed. He was often there, but never without invitation; and he was not always to be had. He had less leisure; he was senior clerk, and the junior was dull and untrained; and he often had work to do far into the evening. He looked bright and well, as though possessed of a sense of being valuable in his own place, more conducive to happiness than even congeniality of employment; and Sophy, though now and then disappointed at his non-appearance, always had a good reason for it, and continued to justify Mr. Dusautoy's boast, that the air of the hill had made another woman of her.

Visiting cards had, of course, come in numbers to Willow Lawn; but Albinia seemed to have caught her husband's aversions, and it would be dangerous to say how long it was before she lashed herself into setting off for a round of calls.

Nothing surprised her more than Miss Goldsmith's reception. Conscious of her neglect, she expected the stiff manner to be more formal than ever; but the welcome was almost warm, and there was something caressing in her fears that Miss Kendal would be tired. Mr. Goldsmith was not quite well, there were threatenings of gout, and his sister had persuaded him to visit the relations at Bristol next week; everything might safely be trusted to young More, and therewith came such praise of his steadiness and ability, that Albinia did not know which way to look, when all was ascribed to Mr. Kendal's great kindness to him.

It was too palpable to be altogether pleasant. Sophia Kendal was heiress enough to be a very desirable connexion for the bank. Albinia was afraid she should see through the lady's graciousness, and took her leave in haste; but Sophy only said, 'Do you remember, mamma, when the Goldsmiths thought we unsettled him?'

Before Albinia had disarmed her reply of the irony on the tip of her tongue, the omnibus came lumbering

round the corner, and a voice proceeded from the rear, the door flew open, and there was a rapid exit.

Face and voice, light step, and gay bearing, all were Fred—the empty sleeve, the sole resemblance to the shattered convalescent of a few weeks back.

‘There, Albinia! I said you should see her first. You haven’t got any change, have you?’ the last being addressed either to Albinia, the omnibus conductor, or a lady, who made a tender of two shillings, while Albinia ordered the luggage on to Willow Lawn, though something was faintly said about the inn.

‘And there!’ cried Fred, with an emphatic twist of his moustache, ‘isn’t she all I ever told you?’

‘The last thing was a brick,’ said Albinia, laughing, as she looked at the smiling, confiding, animated face, not the less pleasant for a French Canadian grace that recalled G  nevi  ve.

‘The right article for building a hut, I hope,’ she said, merrily.

‘But how and when could you have come?’

‘This morning, from Liverpool. We did not mean to storm you in this manner; we meant to have settled ourselves at the inn, and walked down; Emily was very particular about it.’

‘But you see, when he saw you, he forgot all my lectures!’ said Emily, taking his welcome for granted.

‘Very proper of him! But, Fred, I don’t quite believe it yet. How long is it since we parted?’

‘Six weeks; just enough to go to Canada and back, with a fortnight in the middle to spare.’

‘And pray how long has Mrs. Fred existed?’

‘Three weeks and two days;’ and turning half round to give her the benefit of his words, ‘it was on purely philanthropic principles, because I could not tie my own necktie.’

‘Now could I,’ said Emily pleadingly to Sophy—‘now could I let him go back again alone, when he came so helpless, and looking so dreadfully ill?’

‘And what are you going to do?’ asked Albinia. ‘You can’t join again.’

'Join! why not? Here's a hand for a horse, and an arm for a wife, and the rest will be done much better for me than ever it was done before.'

'But with her? and at Sebastopol!'

'That's the very thing!' cried the Colonel, again turning about. 'Nothing will serve her but to show how a backwoodsman's daughter can live in a hut.'

'And what will the General say?'

'The General,' cried Emily, 'will endure me better as a fact than as a prospect; and we will teach him that a lady is not all made of nerves and of fancies! See what he will say if we let him into our paradise!'

Fred brightened; though Albinia's inquiry had for a moment taken him a little aback. The one being whom he dreaded was General Ferrars, for whom he cared a thousand times more than for his own elder brother; and he was soon speculating, with his usual insouciance, as to how his announcement might have been received by his lordship, and whether the aunts would look at them as they went through London.

Mr. Kendal met them at the gate, amazed at the avalanche of luggage, but well pleased, for he had grown very fond of Fred, and had been very anxious about him, thinking him broken and enfeebled for life, and hardly expecting him to return from his mad expedition. He was slow to believe his eyes and ears when he beheld a hale, handsome, vigorous man, full of life and activity; but his welcome and congratulations were of the warmest. He could far better stand a sudden inroad than if he had had to meditate for a week on entertaining the bride. Not that the bride wanted entertainment, except waiting upon her husband, who let himself be many degrees less handy than at Malta, for the pleasure of her attentions.

Perhaps the person least gratified was Maurice; for the child shrank with shy reverence from him whom his brother had saved, and would as soon have thought of making a plaything of Gilbert's sword as of having fun with the survivor. The sight of such a merry man was a shock, and he abruptly repelled all attempts at playing

with him, and kept apart with a big book on a chair before him, a Kendalism for which he amply compensated when familiarity had diminished his awe.

Mr. Kendal, though little disposed to exert himself to talk, liked to watch his wife reviving into animation; and Sophy taking a full share in the glee with which Emily enjoyed turning the laugh against the good-natured soldier. In the midst of their flush of joy there was a tender consideration about the young couple, such as to hinder their tone from jarring. Indeed, it was less consideration than fellow-feeling, for Gilbert Kendal had become enshrined in the depths of Fred's heart; while to Emily the visit was well-nigh a pilgrimage. All her hero-worship was directed to the youth who had guarded her soldier's life, nursed him in his sickness, and, as he averred, inspired him with serious thoughts. Poor, failing, timid, penitent Gilbert was to her a very St. George, and every relic of him was viewed with reverence; she composed a countenance for him from his father's fine features, and fitted the fragments of his history into an ideal, till Sophy, after being surprised and gratified, began to view Gilbert through a like halo, and to rank him with his twin brother. Friendship was a new and agreeable phase of life to Sophy, who found a suitable companion in such an open-hearted person, simpler in nature, and fresher than herself, free from English commonplaces, though older and of more standing. She expanded and brightened wonderfully; and Emily, imagining her a female Gilbert, was devoted to her, and thought her a marvel of learning, depth, goodness, and humility, the more striking for her tinge of grave pensiveness.

'Why, Albinia,' said the Colonel, 'didn't I hear that it was your handsome daughter who is married?'

'Yes; poor Lucy was always called our pretty one.'

'More admired than her sister? Why, she never could have had a countenance!'

'Yes,' said Albinia, highly gratified by the opinion of such a connoisseur. 'I always told Winifred that Sophy was the beauty, but she has only lately had health or animation to set her off.'

'I declare, when we overtook you in the street, she looked a perfect Spanish princess, in her black robes and great shady hat. You ought always to keep her in black. Ha! Emily, what are you smiling at?'

His wife looked up into his face with mischievous shyness in her eyes, as if she wanted him to say what would be a liberty in her. Somebody else had overtaken the ladies nearly at the same moment, and Albinia exulted in perceiving that the embellishment had been observed by others besides herself. She did not look so severe but that Fred was encouraged to repeat, 'Only lately had health or animation? When Irish winds blow this way, I fancy— But what will the aunts say?'

'They are not Sophy's aunts, whatever they are to you.'

'What will Kendal say? which is more to the purpose.'

'Oh! he saw it first; he will be delighted; but you must not say a word to him, for it can't come to anything just now.'

* Albinia was thus confirmed in her anticipations, and the bridal pair, only wishing everybody to be as happy as themselves, took the matter up with such vivid interest and amusement, that she was rather afraid of a manifestation such as to shock either her husband or the parties themselves; but Fred was too much of a gentleman, and Emily too considerate, for anything perilously marked. Only she thought Emily need not have been so decided in making room for Ulick next to Sophy, when they were all looking out at the young moon at the conservatory-door that evening.

And then Emily took her husband's arm, and insisted on going down the garden to be introduced to English nightingales; and though she was told they never had come there in the memory of man, she was bent on doing as she would be done by, and drew him along the silvered paths, among the black shadows of the trees; and Ulick asked Sophy if she wished to go too. She looked as if she should like it very much; he fetched a couple of cloaks out of the hall, put her into one, and ran after Mrs. Ferrars with the other.

'Well!' thought Albinia, as she stood at the conservatory-door, 'how much more boldness and tact some people have than others! If I had lived a hundred years, I should not have managed it so well!'

'What's become of them?' said Mr. Kendal, as she went back to the drawing-room.

'Gone to listen for nightingales!'

'Nightingales? How could you let them go into the river-fog?'

'Emily was bent upon it; she is too much of a bride not to have her way.'

'Umph! I wonder Sophy was so foolish.'

They came back in a quarter of an hour. No nightingales; and Fred was indulging in reminiscences of bullfrogs; the two ladies were rapturous on the effect of the moonbeams in the ripple of the waters, and the soft furry white mist rising over the meadows. Ulick shivered, and leant over the fire to breathe a drier air, bantering the ladies for their admiration, and declaring that Mrs. Ferrars had taken the moan of an imprisoned house-dog for the nightingale, which he disdainfully imitated with buzz, zizz, and guggle, assuring her she had had no loss; but he looked rather white and chilled. Sophy whispered something to her papa, who rang the bell, and ordered in wine and hot water.

'There, Emily,' said Albinia, when he had taken his leave; 'what shall we say to your nightingales, if Mr. O'More catches his ague again?'

'Oh, there are moments when people don't catch agues,' said Fred. 'He would be a poor fellow to catch an ague after all that, though, by-the-bye, it is not a place to go to at night without a cigar.'

Albinia was on thorns, lest Sophy should be offended; but though her cheeks lighted up, and she was certainly aware of some part of their meaning, either she did not believe in the possibility of any one bantering her, or else the assumption was more agreeable than the presumption was disagreeable. She endured with droll puzzled dignity, when Fred teased her anxiety the next day to know whether Mr. O'More had felt any ill effects; and it really

appeared as if she liked him better for what might have been expected to be a dire affront; but then he was a man whose manner enabled to do and say whatever he pleased.

Emily never durst enter on the subject with her, but had more than one confidential little gossip with Albinia, and repeatedly declared that she hoped to be in England when 'it' took place. Indeed that week's visit made them all so intimate, that it was not easy to believe how recent was the acquaintance.

The aunts had been so much disappointed at Fred's desertion, so much discomfited at his recovery contrary to all predictions, and so much annoyed at his marriage, that it took all their kindness, and his Crimean fame, to make them invite him and his colonial wife to the Family Office, to be present at the royal distribution of medals. However, the good ladies did their duty; and Emily and Sophy parted with promises of letters.

The beginning of the correspondence was as full a description of the presentation of the medals as could be given by a person who only saw one figure wherever she went, and to whom the great incident of the day was, that the gracious and kind-hearted Queen had herself fastened the left-handed Colonel's medal as well as Emily could have done it herself! There was another medal, with two clasps, that came to Bayford, and which was looked at in pensive but not unhappy silence. 'You shall have it some day, Maurice, but not now,' said Mr. Kendal; and all felt that now meant his own lifetime. It was placed where Gilbert would well have liked to see it, beside his brother Edmund's watch.

Emily made Mrs. Annesley and Miss Ferrars more fond of her in three days, than eleven years had made them of Winifred; too fond, indeed, for they fell to preaching to Fred upon the horrors of Sebastopol, till they persuaded him that he was a selfish wretch, and brought him to decree that she should stay with them during his absence. But, as Emily observed that was not what she left home for; she demolished his arguments with a small amount of playing at petulance, and trium-

phantly departed for the East, leaving Aunt Mary crying over her as a predestined victim.

The last thing Fred did before sailing, was to send Albinia a letter from his brother, that she might see 'how very kind and cordial Belraven was,' besides something that concerned her more nearly.

Lord Belraven was civil when it cost him nothing, and had lately regarded his inconvenient younger brother with favour, as bringing him distinction, and having gained two steps without purchase, removed, too, by his present rank, and the pension for his wound, from being likely to become chargeable to him; so he had written such brotherly congratulations, that good honest Fred was quite affected. He was even discursive enough to mention some connexions of the young man who had been with Fred in the Crimea, a Mr. Cavendish Dusautoy, a very good sort of fellow, who gave excellent dinners, and was a pleasant yachting companion. His wife was said to be very pretty and pleasing; but she had arrived at Genoa very unwell, had been since confined, and was not yet able to see any one. It was said to be the effect of her distress for the death of her brother, and the estrangement from her family, who had behaved very ill about his property. Had not Albinia Ferrars married into that family?

Albinia knew enough of her noble relative to be aware that good dinners and obsequiousness were the way to his esteem, and Algernon's was the sort of arrogance that would stoop to adore a coronet. All this was nothing, however, to the idea of Lucy, ill in that strange place, with no one to care for her but her hard master. Albinia sometimes thought of going to find her out at Genoa; but this was too utterly wild and impossible, and nothing could be done but to write letters of affectionate inquiry, enclosing them to Lord Belraven.

Algernon's answer was solemn, and as brief as he could make anything. He was astonished that the event had escaped the notice of the circle at Bayford, since he believed it had appeared in all the principal European newspapers; and his time had been so fully occupied, that he had imagined that intimation sufficient, since it

was evident from the tone of the recent correspondence, that the family of Bayford were inclined to drop future intercourse. He was obliged for the inquiries for Lucy, and was happy to say she was recovering favourably, though the late unfortunate events, and the agitation caused by letters from home, had affected her so seriously, that they had been detained at Genoa for nearly four months to his great inconvenience, instead of pushing on to Florence and Rome. It had been some compensation that he had become extremely intimate with that most agreeable and superior person, Lord Belraven, who had consented to become sponsor to his son.

Lucy wrote to Albinia. Poor thing, the letter was the most childishly expressed, and the least childishly felt, she had ever written; its whole aspect was weak and woe-begone; yet there was less self-pity, and more endeavour to make the best of it than before. She had the dearest little baby in the world; but he was very delicate, and she wished mamma would send out an English nurse, for she could not bear that Italian woman—her black eyes looked so fierce, and she was sure it was not safe to have those immense pins in her hair. Expense was nothing; but she should never be happy till she had an Englishwoman about him, especially now that she was getting better, and Algernon would want her to come out again with him. Dear Algernon, he had lost the Easter at Rome for her sake; but perhaps it was a good thing, for he was often out in Lord Belraven's yacht, and she could be quiet with baby. She did wish baby to have had her dear brothers' names, but Algernon would not consent. Next Tuesday he was to be christened; and then followed a string of mighty names, long enough for a Spanish princess, beginning with Belraven!!!

Lucy Dusautoy's dreary condition in the midst of all that wealth could give, was a contrast to Emily Ferrars' buoyant delight in the burrow which was her first married home, and proved a paradise to many a stray officer, aye, maybe, to Lieutenant-General Sir William Ferrars himself. Her letters were charming, especially a detail of Fred meeting Bryan O'More coming out of the

trenches, grim, hungry, and tired, having recently kicked a newly alighted shell down from the parapet, with the cool words, 'Be off with you, you ugly baste you;' of his wolfish appetite after having been long reduced to simple rations, though he kept a curly black lamb loose about his hut, because he hadn't the heart to kill it; and it served him for bed if not for board, all his rugs and blankets having flown off in the hurricane, or been given to the wounded; he had been quite affronted at the suggestion that a Galway pig was as well lodged as himself—it was an insult to any respectable Irish animal!

Albinia sent Maurice to summon Ulick to enjoy the letter in store for him. He looked grave and embarrassed, and did not light up as usual at Bryan's praises. He said that his aunt, who had written to him on business, had given a bad account of Mr. Goldsmith; but Albinia hardly thought this accounted for his pre-occupation, and was considering how to probe it, when her brother Maurice opened the door. 'Ulick O'More! that's right; the very man I was in search of!'

'How's Winifred, Maurice?'

'Getting on wonderfully well. I really think she is going to make a start, after all! and she is in such spirits herself.'

'And the boy?'

'Oh, a thumping great fellow! I promise you he'll be a match for your Maurice.'

'I do believe it is to reward Winifred for sparing you in the spring when we wanted you so much! Come, sit down, and wait for Edmund.'

'No; I've not a moment to stay. I'm to meet Bury again at Woodside at six o'clock; he drove me there, and I walked on, looking in at your lodgings by the way, Ulick.'

'I'm not there now. I am keeping guard at the bank.'

'So they told me. Well, I hope your guard is not too strict for you to come over to Fairmead on Sunday; we want you to do our boy the kindness to be his god-father!'

Sophy blushed with approving gratitude.

'I don't consider that it will be a sinecure—he squalls in such a characteristic manner that I am convinced he will rival his cousin here in all amiable and amenable qualities; so I consider it particularly desirable that he should be well provided with great disciplinarians.'

'You certainly could not find any one more accomplished in teaching dunces to read,' said Albinia.

'When their mammas have taught them already!' added Ulick, laughing. 'Thank you; but you know I can't sleep out; Hyder Ali and I are responsible for a big chest of sovereigns, and all the rest of it.'

'Nor could I lodge you at present; so we are agreed. My proposition is that you should drive my sister over on Sunday morning. My wife is wearying for a sight of her; and she has not been at Fairmead on a Sunday since she left it; eh, Albinia?'

'I suppose for such a purpose it is not wrong to use the horse,' she said; her eyes sparkling.

'And you might put my friend Maurice between you, if you can't go out pleasuring without him.'

'I scorn you, sir; Maurice is as good as gold; I shall leave him at home, I think, to prove that I can—'

'That's the reward of merit!' exclaimed Sophy.

'She expects my children to corrupt him!' quoth Mr. Ferrars.

'For shame, Maurice; that's on purpose to make me bring him. Well, we'll see what papa says, and if he thinks the new black horse strong enough, or to be trusted with Mr. O'More.'

'I only wish 'twas a jaunting car!' cried Ulick.

'And what's the boy's name to be? Not Belraven, I conclude, like my unfortunate grandson—Maurice, I hope.'

'No; the precedent of his namesake would be too dangerous. I believe he is to be Edmund Ulick. Don't take it as too personal, Ulick, for it was the name of our mutual connexion.'

'I take the personal part though, Maurice; and thank you,' said Albinia, and Mr. Ferrars looked more happy

and joyous than any time since his wife's health had begun to fail. Always cheerful, and almost always taking matters up in the most lively point of view, it was only by comparison that want of spirits in him could be detected; and it was chiefly by the vanishing of a certain careworn, anxious expression about his eyes, and by the ring of his merry laugh, that Albinia knew that he thought better of his wife's state than for the last five or six years.

Albinia and Ulick drove off at six o'clock on a lovely summer Sunday morning, with Maurice between them in a royal state of felicity. That long fresh drive, past summer hay-fields sleeping in their silver bath of dew, and villages tardily awakening to the well-earned Sunday rest, was not the least pleasant part of the day; and yet it was completely happy, not even clouded by one outbreak of Master Maurice. Luckily for him, Mary had a small class, who absorbed her superabundant love of rule; and little Alby was a fair-haired, apple-cheeked maiden of five, who awoke both admiration and chivalry, and managed to coquet with him and Ulick both at once, so that Willie had no disrespect to his sisters to resent.

He was exemplary at church, well-behaved at dinner, and so little on his mamma's mind, that she had a delightful renewal of her acquaintance with the Sunday-school, and a leisurable gossip with Mrs. Reid and the two Miss Reids, collectively and individually; but the best of all was a long quiet *tête-à-tête* with Winifred.

After the evening service, Mr. Ferrars himself carried his newly-christened boy back to the mother, and paused that his sister might come with him, and they might feel like the old times, when the three had been alone together.

'Yes,' said Winifred, when he had left them, 'it is very pretty playing at it; but one cannot be the same.'

'Nor would one exactly wish it,' said Albinia; 'though I think you are going to be more the same.'

'Perhaps,' said Winifred; 'the worst of being ill is that it does wear one's husband so! When he came in, and tried to make me fancy we were going back to Wil-

lie's time, I could not help thinking how different you both looked.'

'Well, so much the better and more respectable,' said Albinia. 'You know I always wanted to grow old; I don't want to stop short like your sister Anne, who looks as much the child of the house as ever.'

'I wish you had as few cares as Anne. Look; I declare that's a grey hair!'

'I know. I like it; now Sophy is growing young, and I'm growing old, it is all correct.'

'Old, indeed!' ejaculated Winifred, looking at her fair fresh complexion and bright features; 'don't try for that, when even Edmund is not grey.'

'Yes he is,' said Albinia, gravely; 'Malta sowed many white threads in his black head, and worry about those buildings has brought more.'

'Worry; I'm very sorry to hear of it.'

'Yes; the tenures are so troublesome, and everybody is so cantankerous. If he wanted to set up some pernicious manufacture, it could not be worse! The Osbornes, after having lived with Tibbs's Alley close to them all their lives, object to the alms-houses! Mr. Baron won't have the new drains carried through his little strip of land. The Town Council think we are going to poison the water; and Pettilove, and everybody else who owns a wretched tenement, that we shall increase the wants of their tenants, and lower their rents. If it be carried through, it will be by that sheer force in going his own way that Edmund can exert when he chooses.'

'And he will?'

'Oh, yes, no fear of that; he goes on, avoiding seeing or hearing what he has not to act upon; but worse than all are the people themselves; Tibbs's Alley all has notice to quit, but none of them can be got rid of till Martinmas, and some not till Lady-day; and the beer-house people are in such a rage! The turnout of the public-houses come and roar at our gate on Saturday nights; and they write up things on the wall against him! and one day they threw over into the garden what little Awkey called a poor dear dead pussy. I believe they

tell them all sorts of absurd things about his tyranny ; poor creatures.'

'Can't you get it stopped?'

'Edmund won't summon any one, because he thinks it would do more harm than good. He says it will pass off; but it grieves him more than he shows: he thinks he could once have made himself more popular: but I don't know, it is a horrid set.'

'I thought you said he was in good spirits.'

'And so he is: he never gets depressed and unwilling to be spoken to. He is ready to take interest in everything; and always so busy! When I remember how he never seemed to be obliged to attend to anything, I laugh at the contrast; and yet he goes about it all so gravely and slowly, that it never seems like a change.'

In this and other home talk nearly an hour had passed, when Mr. Ferrars returned. 'Are you come to tell me to go?' said Albinia.

'Not particularly,' he said, in a tone that made her laugh.

'No, no,' said Winifred. 'I want a great deal more of her. Where have you been?'

'I have been to see old Wilks; Ulick walked down with me. By-the-bye, Albinia, what nonsense has Fred's wife been talking to his brother!'

'Emily does not talk nonsense!' fired up Albinia, colouring, nevertheless.

'The worse for her, then! However, it seems Bryan has disturbed this poor fellow very much, by congratulating him on his prospects at Willow Lawn.'

'Oh! that is what made him so distant and cautious, is it?' laughed Albinia. 'I think Mrs. Emily might as well not have betrayed it.'

'Betrayed! What could have passed?'

'Oh! Emily and Fred saw it as plain as I did. Why, it does not do credit to your discernment, Maurice; papa found it out long ago, and told me.'

'Kendal did?'

'Yes, that he did, and did not mind the notion at all; rather liked it, in fact.'

‘Well!’ said Mr. Ferrars, in a different tone, ‘it is a very queer business! I certainly did not think the lad showed any symptoms. He said he had heard gossip about it before, and had tried to be careful; his aunt talked to him once, but, as he said, it would be nothing but the rankest treason to think of such a thing, on the terms on which he is treated.’

‘Ay, that’s it!’ said Albinia; ‘he acts most perfectly.’

‘Perfectly indeed, if that were acting,’ said Mr. Ferrars.

‘And what made him speak to you?’ asked Winifred.

‘He wanted to consult me. He said it was very hard on him, for all the pleasure he had came from his intercourse with Willow Lawn; and he could not bear to keep at a distance, because it looked as if he had not forgotten the old folly about the caricature; but he was afraid of the report coming to your ears or Mr. Kendal’s, because you would think it so wrong and shameful an abuse of your kindness.’

‘And that’s his whole concern?’

‘So he told me.’

‘And what advice did you give him?’

‘I told him Bayford was bent on gossip, and no one heeded it less than my respected brother and sister.’

‘That was famous of you, Maurice. I was afraid you would have put it upon his honour and the state of his own heart.’

‘Sooth to say, I did not think his heart appeared very ticklish.’

‘Oh! Maurice, Maurice! But you’ve not been there to see the hot fits and the cold fits! It is a very fine thermometer whether he says Sophy or Miss Kendal.’

‘And you say Edmund perceived this?’

‘Much you would trust my unassisted ’cuteness! I tell you he did, and that it will make him happier than anything.’

‘Very well; then my advice will have done no harm. I did not think there had been so much self-control in an Irishman.’

‘Had he not better say, so much blindness in the rector of Fairmead?’ laughed Albinia.

‘And pray what course is the affair to take?’

‘The present, I suppose. Some catastrophe will occur at last to prove to him that we honour him, and don’t view it as outrageous presumption; and then—oh! there can be no doubt that he will have a share in the bank; and Sophy may buy toleration for his round O. After all, he has the best of it as to ancestry, and we Kendals need not turn up our noses at banking.’

‘I think he will be too proud to address her, except on equality as to money matters.’

‘Pride is sometimes quelled and love free,’ said Albinia. ‘No, no; content yourself with having given the best advice in the world, with your eyes fast shut!’

And Albinia went home in high spirits.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Nor long afterwards, Ulick O’More was summoned to Bristol, where his uncle had become suddenly worse; but he had only reached Hadminster when a telegraph met him with the news of Mr. Goldsmith’s death, and orders to remain at his post.

He came to the Kendals in the evening in great grief; he had really come to love and esteem his uncle, and he was very unhappy at having lost the chance of a reconciliation for his mother. As her chief friend and confidant, he knew that she regarded the alienation of her own family as the punishment of her disobedient marriage, and that his own appointment had been valued chiefly as an opening towards fraternal feeling, and reproached himself for not having made more direct efforts to induce his uncle to enter into personal intercourse with her. ‘If I had only ventured it before he went to Bristol,’ he said; ‘I was a fool not to have done so; and there, the Goldsmiths

detest the very name of us! Why could they not have telegraphed for me? I might have heard what would have done my mother's heart good for the rest of her life. I am sure my poor uncle wanted to ease his mind!'

'May he not have sent some communication direct to her?'

'I trust he did! I have long thought he only kept her aloof from habit, and felt kindly towards her all the time.'

'And never could persuade himself to make a move towards her until too late,' said Albinia.

'Yes. Nothing comes home to one more than the words, "Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art in the way with him." If once one comes to think there's creditable pride in holding out, there's no end to it, or else too much end.'

'Mr. Goldsmith was persevering in the example his father had set him,' said Mr. Kendal.

'Ay! my mother never blamed either, and I'm afraid, if the truth were told, my father was hot enough too, though it would all have been bygones with him long ago, if they would have let it. But I was thinking just then of my own foolishness last winter, when I would not grant you it was pride, Mrs. Kendal, for fear I should have to repent of it.'

'What has brought you to see that it was?' asked she.

'One comes to a better mind when the fit is off,' he said. 'I hope I will not be as bad next time.'

'I hope we shall never give you a next time,' said Albinia; 'for neither party is comfortable, perched on a high horse.'

'And you see,' continued Ulick, 'it is hard for us to give up our pride, because it is the only thing we've got of our own, and has been meat, drink, and clothing to us for many a year.'

'So no wonder you make the most of it.'

'True; I think a very high born and very rich man *might* be humble,' said Ulick, so meditatively that they laughed; but Sophy said,

'No, that is not a paradox; the real difficulty is not in willingly yielding, but in taking what we cannot help.'

'Well,' said Ulick, 'I hope it is not pride not to intend working under Andrew Goldsmith.'

'Do you consider that as your fate?' asked Albinia.

'Never my fate,' said Ulick, quickly; 'hardly even my alternative, for he would like to put up a notice, "No Irish need apply." We had enough of each other last winter.'

'And do you suppose,' said Mr. Kendal, 'that Mr. Goldsmith has left your position exactly the same?'

'I've no reason to think otherwise. I refused all connection with the bank if it was to interfere with my name. I don't think it unlikely that he may have left me a small compliment in the way of shares; but if so, I shall sell them, and make them keep me at Oxford. I'm not too old yet!'

'Then the work of these four years is wasted,' said Mr. Kendal, gravely.

'No, indeed,' cried Ulick; 'not if it takes me where I've always longed to be! Or, if not, I flatter myself I'm accountant enough to be an agent in my own country.'

'Anything to get away from here,' said Albinia, with a shade of asperity, provoked by the spirit of enterprise in his voice.

'After all, it is a bit of a place,' said Ulick; 'and the office parlour is not just a paradise! Then 'tis all on such a narrow scale, too little to absorb one, and too much to let one do anything else; I see how larger transactions might be engrossing, but this is mere cramping and worrying; I know I could do better for my family in the end than by what I can screw out of my salary now; and if it is no longer to give my poor mother a sense of expiation, as she calls it, why, then, the cage-door is open.'

His eyes glittered, and Sophy exclaimed, 'Yes; and now the training is over, it has made you fitter to fly.'

'It has,' he said; 'and I'm thankful for it. Without being here, I would never have learnt application—nor some better things, I hope.'

They scarcely saw him again till after the funeral, when late in the day he came into the drawing-room, and saying that his aunt was pretty well and composed, he knelt down on the floor with the little Awk, and silently built up a tower with her wooden bricks. His hand trembled nervously at first, but gradually steadied as the elevation became critical; and a smile of interest lighted his face as he became absorbed in raising the structure to the last brick, holding back the eager child with one hand lest she should overthrow it. Completion, triumph, a shock, a downfall!

'Well,' cried the elder Albinia, 'unable to submit to the suspense.'

'*Telle est la vie,*' answered Ulick, smiling sadly as he passed his hand over his brow.

'It's too bad of him,' broke out Mrs. Kendal.

'I thought you were prepared,' said Sophy, severely, disappointed to see him so much discomposd.

'How should I be prepared,' said he, petulantly, 'for the whole concern, house, and bank, and all the rest of it?'

'Left to you?' was the cry.

'Every bit of it, and an annuity apiece charged on it to my mother and aunt for their lives! My aunt told me how it came about. It was all that fellow Andrew's fault.'

'Or misfortune,' murmured Albinia.

'My poor uncle had made a will in Andrew's favour long before my time, and at Bristol he wanted to make some arrangement for my mother and for me; but it seems Mr. Andrew took exception at me—would not promise to continue me on, nor to give me a share in the business, and at last my uncle was so much disgusted, that he sent for a lawyer and cut Andrew out of his will altogether. My aunt says he went on asking for me, and it was Andrew's fault that they wrote instead of telegraphing. You can't think what kind messages he sent to me;' and Ulick's eyes filled with tears. 'My poor uncle, away from home, and with that selfish fellow.'

"Did he send any message to your mother?"

‘Yes! he told my aunt to write to her that he was sorry they had been strangers so long, and that—I’d been like a son to him. I’m sure I wish I had been. I dare say he would have let me if I had not flown out about my O. I could have saved changing it without making such an intolerable row, and then he might have died more at peace with the world.’

‘At peace with you at least he did.’

‘I trust so. But if I could only have been by his side, and felt myself a comfort, and thanked him with all my heart. Maybe he would have listened to me, and not have sown ill-will between Andrew and me, by giving neither what we would like.’

‘Do you expect us to be sorry?’

‘Nay, I came to be helped out of my ingratitude and discontent at finding the cage-door shut, and myself chained to the oar; for as things are left, I could not get it off my hands without giving up my mother’s interests and my aunt’s. Besides, my poor uncle left me an entreaty to keep things up creditably like himself, and do justice by the bank. It is as if, poor man, it was an idol that he had been high priest to, and wanted me to be the same—ay, and sacrifice too.’

‘Nay, there are two ways of working, two kinds of sacrifice; and besides, you are still working for your mother.’

‘So I am, but without the hope she had before. To be sure, it would be affluence at home, or would be if she could have it in her own hands. Little Redmond shall have the best of educations! And we must mind there is something in advance by the time Bryan wants to purchase his company.’

Albinia asked how his aunt liked the arrangement. It seemed that Andrew had offended her nearly as much as her brother, and that she was clinging to Ulick as her great comfort and support; he did not like to stay long away from her, but he had rushed down to Willow Lawn to avoid the jealous congratulations of the cousinhood.

‘You will hardly keep from glad people,’ said Albinia.

‘You must shut yourself up if you cannot be congratulated. How rejoiced Mr. Dusantoy will be!’

‘Whatever is, is best,’ sighed Ulick. ‘I shall mind less when the first is past! I must go and entertain all these people at dinner!’ and he groaned. ‘Good evening. Heigh ho! I wonder if our Banshee will think me worth keening for!’

‘I hope she will have no occasion yet,’ said Albinia, as he shut the door; ‘but she will be a very foolish Banshee if she does not, for she will hardly find such another O’More! Well, Sophy, my dear.’

‘We should have missed him,’ said Sophy, as grave as a judge.

Albinia’s heart beat high with the hope that Ulick would soon perceive sufficient consolation for remaining at Bayford, but of course he could make no demonstration while Miss Goldsmith continued with him. She made herself very dependent on him, and he devoted his evenings to her solace. He had few leisure moments, for the settlement of his affairs occupied him, and full attention was most important to establish confidence at this critical juncture, when it might be feared that his youth, his nation, and Andrew Goldsmith’s murmurs might tell against him. Mr. Kendal set the example of putting all his summer rents into his hands, and used his influence to inspire trust; and fortunately the world had become so much accustomed to transacting affairs with him, that the country business seemed by no means inclined to fall away. Still there was much hard work and some perplexity; the Bristol connexion made themselves troublesome, and the ordinary business was the heavier from the clerks being both so young and inexperienced that he was obliged to exercise close supervision. It was guessed, too, that he was not happy about the effect of the influx of wealth at home, and that he feared it would only add to the number of horses and debts.

He soon looked terribly fagged and harassed, and owned that he envied Mr. Hope, who had just received the promise of a district church, in course of building under Colonel Bury’s auspices, about four miles from

Fairmead. To work his way through the University and take Holy Orders had been Ulick's ambition; he would gladly have endured privation for such an object, and it did seem hard that such aspirations should be so absolutely frustrated, and himself forced into the stream of uncongenial, unintellectual toil, in so obscure and uninviting a sphere. The resignation of all lingering hope of escape, and the effort to be contented, cost him more than even his original breaking in; and Mr. Kendal one day found him sitting in his little office parlour unable to think or to speak under a terrible visitation of his autumnal tormentor, brow-ague.

This made Mr. Kendal take to serious expostulation. It was impossible to go on in this way; why did he not send for a brother to help him?

Ulick could not restrain a smile at the fruitlessness of thinking of assistance of this kind from his elder brothers; and as to little Redmond, the only younger one still to be disposed of, he hoped to do better things for him.

'Then send for a sister.'

He hoped he might bring Rose over when his aunt was gone, but he could not shut those two up together at any price.

'Then,' said Mr. Kendal, rather angrily, 'get an experienced, trustworthy clerk, so as to be able to go from home, or give yourself some relaxation.'

'Yes; I inquired about such a person, but there's the salary; and where would be the chance of getting Redmond to school?'

'I think your father might see to that.'

Ulick had no answer to make to this. The legacy to Mrs. O'More might nearly as well have been thrown into the sea.

'Well,' said Mr. Kendal, walking about the room, 'why don't you keep a horse?'

'As a less costly animal than brother, sister, or clerk?' said Ulick, laughing.

'Your health will prove more costly than all the rest if you do not take care.'

'Well, my aunt told me it would be respectable and

promote confidence if I lived like a gentleman and kept my horse. I'll see about it,' said Ulick, in a more persuadable tone.

The seeing about it resulted in the arrival of a genuine product of county Galway, a long-legged, raw-boned hunter, with a wild, frightened eye, quivering, suspicious-looking ears, and an ill-omened name compounded of kill and of kick, which Maurice alone endeavoured to pronounce; also an outside car, very nearly as good as new. This last exceeded Ulick's commission, but it had been such a bargain, that Connel had not been able to resist it; indeed it cost more in coming over than the original price; but Ulick nearly danced round it, promising Mrs. and Miss Kendal that when new cushioned and new painted they would find it beat everything.

He was not quite so envious of Mr. Hope when he devoted the early morning hours to Killye-kickye, as the incorrect world called his steed, and, if the truth must be told, he first began to realize the advantages of wealth, when he set his name down among the subscribers to the hounds.

Nor was this the only subscription to which he was glad to set his name; there were others where Mr. Dusautoy wanted funds, and Mr. Kendal's difficulties were lessened by having another lord of the soil on his side. Some exchanges brought land enough within their power to make drainage feasible, and Ulick started the idea that it would be better to locate the almshouses at the top of the hill, on the site of Madame Belmarché's old house, than to place them where Tibbs's Alley at present was, close to the river, and far from church.

Mr. Kendal's plans were unpopular, and two or three untoward circumstances combined to lead to his being regarded as a tyrant. He could not do things gently, and had not a conciliating manner. Had he been more free spoken, real oppression would have been better endured than benefits against people's will. He interfered to prevent some Sunday trading; and some of the Tibbs's Alley tenants who ought to have gone at midsummer, chose to stay on, and set him at defiance till they had to

be forcibly ejected ; whereupon Ulick O'More showed that he was not thoroughly Anglicised by demanding if, under such circumstances, it was safe to keep the window shutters unclosed at night, Mr. Kendal's head was such a beautiful mark under the lamp.

If not a mark for a pistol, he was one for the disaffected blackguard papers, which made up a pathetic case of a helpless widow with her bed taken away from under her, ending with certain vague denunciations which were read with roars of applause at the last beer shop which could not be cleared till Christmas, while the closing of the rest sent herds thither ; and papers were nightly read, representing the Nabob expelling the industrious from the beloved cottages of their ancestors, by turns, to swell his own overgrown garden, or to found a convent, whence, as a disguised Jesuit, he meant to convert all Bayford to popery.

As Albinia wrote to G  nevi  ve, they were in a state of siege, for only in the middle of the day did Mr. Kendal allow the womankind to venture out without an escort, the evening was disturbed by howlings at the gate, and all sorts of petty acts of spite were committed in the garden, such as injuring trees, stealing fruit, and carrying off the children's rabbits. Let that be as it might, G  nevi  ve owned herself glad to come to hospitable Willow Lawn, though sorry for the cause.

Poor Mr. Rainsforth, after vainly striving to recruit his health at Torquay during the vacation, had been sentenced to give up his profession, and ordered to Madeira, and G  nevi  ve was upon the world again.

The Kendals claimed her promise of a long visit, or rather that she should come home, and take time and choice in making any fresh engagement, nay, that she should not even inquire for a situation till after Christmas. And after staying to the last moment when she could help the Rainsforths, she proposed to spend a day or two with her aunt at the convent, and then come to her friends at Bayford.

Mr. Kendal drove his ladies to fetch her. He had lately indulged the household with a large comfortable

open carriage with two horses, a rival to Mr. O'More's notable car, where he used to drive in an easy lounging fashion on one side, with Hyder Ali to balance him on the other.

This was a grand shopping day, an endless business, and as the autumn day began to close in, even Mr. Kendal's model patience was nearly exhausted before they called for their little friend. There was something very sweet and appropriate in her appearance; her dress, without presuming to share their mourning, did not insult it by gay colouring; it was a quiet dark violet and white checked silk, a black mantle, and black velvet bonnet with a few green leaves to the lilac flowers, and the face when at rest was softly pensive, but ready to respond with cheerful smiles and grateful looks. She had become more English, and had dropped much foreign accent and idiom, but without losing her characteristic grace and power of disembarassing those to whom she spoke, and in a few moments even Sophy had lost all sense of meeting under awkward or melancholy circumstances, and was talking eagerly to her dear old sympathizing friend.

There was a great exchange of tidings; G  n  vi  ve had much to tell of her dear Rainsforths, the many vicissitudes of anxiety in which she had shared, and of the children's ways of taking the parting; and of the dear little Fanny who seemed to have carried away so large a piece of her susceptible heart, that Sophy could not help breaking out, 'Well, I do think it is very hard to make yourself a bit of a mother's heart, only to have it torn out again.'

Albinia smiled and said, 'After all, Sophy, happiness in this world is in such loving, only we don't find it out till the rent has been made.'

'And some people can get fond of anything,' said Sophy.

'I'm sure,' said G  n  vi  ve, 'every one is so kind to me I can't help it.'

'I was not blaming you,' said Sophy. 'People are the better for it, but I cannot like except where I esteem, and that does not often come.'

'Oh! don't you think so?' cried G  n  vi  ve.

‘I don’t mean moderate approval. That may extend far, and with it good-will, but there is a deep, concentrated feeling which I don’t believe those who like every one can ever have, and that is life.’

Perhaps the deepening twilight favoured the utterance of her feelings, for, as they were descending a hill, she said, ‘Mamma, that was the place where Maurice was brought back to me.’

She had before passed it in silence, but in the dark she was not afraid of betraying the expression that the thrill of exquisite recollection brought to her countenance; and leaning back in her corner indulged in listening to the narration, as Albinia, unaware of the special point of the episode, related Maurice’s desperate enterprise, going on to dilate on the benefit of having Mr. O’More at the bank rather than Andrew Goldsmith.

‘Ah!’ said G  nevi  ve, ‘it is he who wants to pull down our dear old house. I shall quarrel with him.’

‘G  nevi  ve making common cause with the obstructives of Bayford, as if he had not enemies enough!’

‘What’s that light in the sky?’ exclaimed Sophy, starting up to speak to her father on the driving seat.

‘A bonfire,’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘If we had remembered that it was the 5th of November, we would not have stayed out so late.’ The next moment he drew up the horses, exclaiming, ‘Mr. Hope, will you have a lift?’

Mr. Hope, rather to the ladies’ surprise, took the vacant place beside Sophy, instead of climbing up to the box. He had been to see his intended parish, and was an enviable man, for he was as proud of it as if it had been an intended wife; and Albinia, who knew it for a slice of dreary heath, was entertained with his raptures. Church, schools, and parsonage, each in their way were perfection or at least promised to be, and he had never been so much elevated or so communicative. The speechless little curate seemed to have vanished.

The road, as may be remembered, did not run parallel with the curve of the river, but cutting straight across, entered Bayford over the hill, passing a small open bit of waste land, where stood a few cottages, the outskirts of the town.

Suddenly coming from an overshadowed lane upon this common, a glare of light flashed on them, showing them each other's faces, and casting the shadow of the carriage into full relief. The horses shied violently, and they beheld an enormous bonfire raised on a little knoll about twenty yards in front of them, surrounded by a dense crowd, making every species of hideous noise.

Mr. Kendal checked the horses' start, and Mr. Hope sprang to their heads. They were young and scarcely trustworthy, their restless movements showed alarm, and it was impossible to turn them without both disturbing the crowd and giving them a fuller view of the object of their terror. Mr. Kendal came down, and reconnoitring for a moment, said, 'You had better get out while we try to lead them round, we will go home by Squash Lane.'

Just then a brilliant glow of white flame, and a tremendous roar of applause, put the horses in such an agony, that they would have been too much for Mr. Hope, had not Mr. Kendal started to his assistance, and a man standing by likewise caught the rein. He was a respectable carpenter who lived on the heath, and touching his hat as he recognised them, said, 'Sir, if the ladies would come into my house, and you too, sir. The people are going on in an odd sort of way, and Mrs. Kendal would be frightened. I'll take care of the carriage.'

Mr. Kendal went to the side of the carriage, and asked the ladies if they were alarmed.

'O no!' answered Albinia, 'it is great fun;' and as the horses fidgeted again, 'it feels like a review.'

'You had better get out,' he said; 'I must try to back the horses till I can turn them without running over any one. Will you go into the house? You did not expect to find Bayford so riotous,' he added with a smile, as he assisted G  n  vi  e out.

'You are not going to get up again,' said Albinia, catching hold of him, and in her dread of his committing himself to the mercy of the horses, returning unmeaning thanks to the carpenter's urgent requests that she would take refuge in his house.

In fact, the scene was new and entertaining, and on

the farther side of the road, sheltered by the carriage, the party were entirely apart from the throng, which was too much absorbed to notice them, only a few heads turning at the rattling of the harness, and the ladies were amused at the bright flame, and the dark figures glancing in and out of the light, the shouts of delight and the merry faces.

'There's Guy Fawkes,' cried Albinia, as a procession of scarecrows were borne on chairs amid thunders of acclamation; 'but whom have they besides? Here are some new characters.'

'Most lugubrious looking,' said G  nevi  ve. 'I cannot make out the shouts.'

'It is the Nabob,' said Mr. Kendal. 'Perhaps you do not know that it is my alias. This is my execution.'

The carpenter implored them to come in, and Mr. Hope added his entreaties, but Mr. Kendal would not leave the horses, and the ladies would not leave him; and they all stood still while his effigy was paraded round the knoll, the mark of every squib, the object of every invective that the rabble could roar out at the top of their voices. Jesuits and Papists; Englishmen treated like blackamoor slaves in the Indies; honest folk driven out of house and home; such was the burthen of the cries that assailed the grim representative carried aloft, while the real man stood unmoved as a statue, his tall, powerful figure unstirred, his long driving-whip resting against his shoulder without betraying the slightest motion, neither firm lip nor steady eye changing. G  nevi  ve, with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, 'Oh! this is madness! Will no one tell them how wicked they are?'

'Never mind, my dear,' said Mr. Kendal, pressing the hand that in her fervour she had laid on his arm, 'they will come to their senses in time. No, Mr. Hope, I beg you will not interfere, they are in no state for it; they have done no harm as yet.'

'I wonder what the police are about?' cried Albinia, indignantly.

'They are too few to do any good,' said Mr. Kendal. 'It may be better that they are not incensing the mob.'

It will all go off quietly when this explosion has relieved their feelings.'

They felt as if there were something grand in this perfectly dispassionate reception of the outrage, and they stood awed and silenced, Sophy leaning on him.

'It will soon be over now,' he said; 'they are poking up the flame to receive me.'

'Hark! what's that?'

The mob came swaying back, and a rich voice swelled above all the din, 'Boys, boys, is it burning your friends you are?' Then, for the first time, Mr. Kendal started, and muttered, 'Foolish lad! is he here?'

Confused cries rose again, but the other voice gained the mastery.

'So you call that undertaker-looking figure there Mr. Kendal. Small credit to your taste. You want to burn him. What for?'

'For being a Nabob and a tyrant,' was the shout.

'Much you know of Nabobs! No; I'll tell you what it's for. It is because his son got his death fighting for his queen and his country a year ago, and on his death-bed bade him do his best to drive the fever from your doors, and shelter you and save you from the Union in your old age. Is that a thing to burn him for?'

'We want no Irish papists here!' shouted a blackguard voice. 'Serve him with the same sauce.'

'I never was a papist,' was the indignant reply. 'No more was he; but I've said that the place shan't disgrace itself, and—'

'I'm with you,' shouted another above all the howls of the mob. 'Gilbert Kendal was as kind-hearted a chap as ever lived, and I'll see no wrong done to his father.'

Tremendous uproar ensued; then the well-known tones pealed out again, 'I've given my word to save his likeness. Come on, boys. Hurrah for Kendal!'

The war-cry was echoed by a body of voices, there was a furious *melée* and a charge towards the Nabob, who rocked and toppled down, while stragglers came pressed backwards on all sides.

'Here, Hope, take care of them. Stay with them,' said Mr. Kendal, putting the whip into the curate's hand, and striding towards the nucleus of the fray, through the throng who were driven backwards.

'O'More,' he called, 'what's all this? Give over! Are you mad?' and then catching up, and setting on his legs, a little fallen boy, 'Go home; get out of all this mischief. What are you doing? Take home that child,' to a gaping girl with a baby. 'O'More, I say, I'll commit every man of you if you don't give over.'

He was recognised, and those who had little appetite for the skirmish gave back from him; but the more reckless and daring small fry began shrieking, 'The Nabob!' and letting off crackers and squibs, through which he advanced upon the knot of positive combatants, who were exchanging blows over his prostrate image in front of the fire.

One he caught by the collar, in the act of aiming a blow. The fist was instantly levelled at him, with the cry, 'You rascal! what do you mean by it?' But the fierce struggle failed to shake off the powerful grasp; and at the command, 'Don't be such a fool!' Ulick burst out, 'Murder! 'tis himself!' and in the surprise was dragged some paces before recovering his perceptions.

The cry of police had at the same instant produced a universal scattering, and five policemen, coming on the ground, found scarcely any one to separate or capture. Mr. Kendal relaxed his hold, saying, 'You are my prisoner.'

'I didn't think you'd been so strong,' said Ulick, shaking himself, and looking bewildered. 'Where's the effigy?'

'What's that to you. Come away, like a rational being.'

'Ha! what's that?' as a frightful, agonizing shriek rent the air, and a pillar of flame came rushing across the now open space. It was a child, one mass of fire, and flying, in its anguish, from all who would have seized it. One moment of horror, and it had vanished! The next, G  nevi  re's voice was heard crying, 'Bring me something

more to press on it.' She had contrived to cross its path with her large carriage rug, and was kneeling over it, forcing down the rug to smother the flames. Mr. Hope brought her a shawl, and they all stood round in silent awe.

'The poor child will be stifled,' said Albinia, kneeling down to help to unfold its face.

Poor little face, distorted with terror and agony ! One of the policemen recognised it as the child of the public-house in Tibbs's Alley. There were moans, but no one dared to uncover the limbs ; and the policeman and Mr. Hope proposed carrying it at once to Mr. Bowles, and then home. Mr. Kendal desired that it should be laid on the seat of the carriage, which he would drive gently to the doctor's. G  nevi  ve got in to watch over the poor little boy, and the others walked on by the side, passed the battle-field, now entirely deserted, too much shocked for aught but conjectures on his injuries, and the cause of the misfortune. Either he must have been pushed in on the fire by the runaway rabble, or have trod upon some of the scattered combustibles.

Mr. Bowles desired that the child should be taken home at once, promising to follow instantly ; so at the entrance of Tibbs's Alley, the carriage stopped, and Mr. Hope lifted out the poor little wailing bundle. Albinia was following, but a decided prohibition from her husband checked her. 'I would not have either of you go to that house on any account. Tell them to send to us for whatever they want, but that is enough.'

There was no gainsaying such a command, but as they reached the door of Willow Lawn, Mr. Kendal exclaimed, 'Where is Miss Durant ?'

'She is gone with the little boy,' said Sophy. 'She told me she hoped you would not be displeased. Mr. Hope will take care of her, and she will soon come in.'

'Every one is mad to-night !' cried Mr. Kendal. 'In such a place as that ! I will go for her directly.'

'Pray don't,' said Albinia ; 'no one could speak a rude word to her on such an errand. She and Mr. Hope will be much more secure from incivility without you.'

‘I believe it may be so, but I wish——’

His wish was broken off, for his little Albinia, screaming, ‘Papa! papa!’ clung to him in a transport of caresses, which Maurice explained by saying, ‘Little Awkey has been crying, mamma; she thought they were burning papa in the bonfire.’

‘Papa not burnt!’ cried little Awkey, patting his cheeks, and laying her head on his shoulders alternately, as he held her to his breast. ‘Naughty people wanted to make a fire, but they shan’t burn papa or poor Guy Fawkes, or any of the good men.’

‘And where were you, Ulick?’ cried Maurice, in an imperious, injured way. ‘You said once, perhaps you would take me to see the fire; and I went up to the bank, and they said you were gone; and it was glaring so in the sky; and I did so want to go.’

‘I am glad you stayed away, my man,’ said Albinia.

‘I did want to go,’ said Maurice; ‘and I ran up to the top of the street, and there was Mr. Tritton; and he said if I liked a lark, he would take care of me; but——’ and there he stopped short, and the colour came into his face.

Albinia threw her arm round him, and kissed him, saying, ‘My trusty boy! and so you came home!’

‘Yes; and there was Awkey crying about their burning papa, and she would not go up to the garret-window to see the fire, nor do anything.’

‘Why, what is the sword here for?’ exclaimed Sophy, finding it on the stairs.

‘Because then Awkey was not so afraid.’

For once, Maurice had been exemplary, keeping from the tempting uproar, and devoting himself to soothing his little sister. It was worth all the vexations of the evening; but he went on to ask if Ulick could not take him now, if the fire was not out yet.

‘Not exactly,’ said Mr. Kendal, drily.

‘I beg your pardon, Mr. Kendal,’ said Ulick, who had apparently only just resumed the use of speech; ‘don’t know what I may have done when you collared me, but I’d no more notion of its being you than the Lord Lieutenant.’

'And pray what took you there?' asked Mr. Kendal.
'The surprise was quite as great to me.'

'Why,' said Ulick, 'one of the little lads of my Sunday class gave me a hint the other day that those brutes meant to have a pretty go to-night, and that Jackson was getting up a figure of the Nabob to break their spite upon. So I told my little fellow to give a hint to a few more of the right sort, and we'd go up together, and not let the rascals have their own way.'

'Upon my word, I wonder what the Vicar will say to the use you make of his Sunday-school. Pretty work for his model teacher.'

'What better could the boys be taught than to fight for the good cause? Why, no one is a scratch the worse for it. And do you think we could sit by and see our best friend used worse than a dog?'

'Why not give notice to the police?'

'And would you have me hinder a fight?' cried Ulick, in the most Irish of all his voices.

'Oh! very well, if you like—only there will be a run on the bank to-morrow.'

'What has Ulick been doing, Sophy?' asked Maurice.

'Only what you would have done had you been older, Maurice,' she said, in a hurt voice; 'defending papa's effigy, for which he does not seem to meet with much gratitude.'

'Well,' said Mr. Kendal, who all the time had had more gratitude in his eyes than on his tongue, 'if the burning had had the same consequence as melting one's waxen effigy was thought to have, it might have been worth while to interfere, but I should have thought it more dignified in a respectable substantial householder to let those foolish fellows have their swing.'

'More dignified maybe,' smiled Albinia, 'but less like an O'More.'

'No, you are not going,' said Mr. Kendal; 'I shall not release my prisoner just yet.'

'You carried off all the honour of the day,' said Ulick.
'I had no notion you had such an arm. Why, you swung

me round like a tom-cat, or—' and he exemplified the exploit upon Maurice, and was well buffeted.

'That's a little Irish blarney to propitiate me,' laughed Mr. Kendal, who certainly was in unusual spirits after his execution and rescue by proxy, 'but you won't escape prison fare.'

'There's no doubt who was the heroine of the day,' added Sophy. 'How one envies her!'

'What! your little governess friend?' said Ulick. 'Yes; she did show superior wit, when the rest of the world stood gaping round.'

'It was admirable—just like G  n  vi  e's tenderness and dexterity,' said Albinia. 'I dare say she is doing everything for the poor little fellow.'

'Yes, admirable,' said Mr. Kendal; 'but you all behaved very creditably, ladies.'

'Ay,' said Albinia; 'not to scream is what a man thinks the climax of excellence in a woman.'

'It is generally all that is required,' said Mr. Kendal. 'I don't know what I should have done if poor Lucy had been there.'

Thereupon the ladies went upstairs, Maurice following Sophy to extract a full account of the skirmish. The imp probably had an instinct that she would think more of what redounded to Ulick O'More's glory than of what would be edifying to his own infant mind. It was doubtful how long it would be before Guy Fawkes would arrive at his proper standing in the little Awk's opinion, after the honour of an *auto-da-f  * in company with papa.

Mr. Hope escorted G  n  vi  e home, and was kept to dinner. They narrated that they had found the public-house open, and the bar full of noisy runaways.

The burns were dreadful, but the surgeon did not think they would be fatal, and the child had held G  n  vi  e's hand throughout the dressing, and seemed so unwilling to part with her, that she had promised to come again the next day, and had been thanked gratefully. There seemed no positive want of comforts, and there was every hope that all would do well.

G  n  vi  e looked pale after the scene she had gone

through, and could not readily persuade herself to eat, still less rally her spirits to talk; but she managed to avoid observation at dinner-time, and afterwards a rest on the sofa restored her. She evidently felt, as she said, that this was coming home, and her exquisite gift of tact making her perceive that she was to be at ease and on an equality, she assumed her position without giving her friends the embarrassment of installing her, and Mr. Hope was in such a state of transparent admiration, that Albinia could not help two or three times noiselessly clapping her hands under the table, and secretly thanking the rioters and their tag-rag and bob-tail for having provided a home for little G  n  vi  e Durant.

There was indeed a pang as she thought of Gilbert; but she believed that G  n  vi  e's heart had never been really touched, and was still fresh and open. She thought she might make Mr. Kendal and Sophy equally magnanimous. Perhaps by that time Sophy would be too happy to have leisure to be hurt, and she had little fear but that Mr. Kendal's good sense would conquer his jealousy for his son, though it might cost him something.

Two lovers to befriend at once! Two desirable attachments to foster! There was glory! Not that Albinia fulfilled her mission to a great extent; shamefacedness always restrained her, and she had not Emily's gift for making opportunities. Indeed, when she did her best, so perversely bashful were the parties, that the wrong pairs resorted together, the two who could talk being driven into conversation by the silence of the others.

Of Mr. Hope's sentiments there could be no doubt. He was fairly carried off his feet by the absorption of the passion, which was doubly engrossing, because all ladies had hitherto appeared to him as beings with whom conversation was an impossible duty; but after all he had heard of Miss Durant, he might as a judicious man select her for an excellent *parsoness*, and as a young man fall vehemently in love. Nothing could be more evident to the lookers-on; but Albinia could not satisfy herself whether G  n  vi  e had any suspicion.

She was not very young, knew something of the

world, and was acute and observing; but on the other hand, she had made it a principle never to admit the thought of courtship, and she might not be sufficiently acquainted with the habits of the individual to be sensible of the symptomatic alteration.

She had begged the Dusautoys to make her leisure profitable, and spent much of her time upon the schools, on her little patient in Tibbs's Alley, and in going about among the poor; she visited her old shopkeeper friends, and drank tea with them much oftener than gratified Mr. Kendal, talking so openly of the pleasure of seeing them again, that Albinia sometimes thought the blood of the O'Mores was a little chafed.

'There,' said G  n  vi  e, completing a housewife, filled with needles ready threaded, 'I wonder whether the omnibus is too protestant to leave a parcel at the convent?'

'I don't think its scruples of conscience would withstand sixpence,' said Albinia.

'You might post it for less than that,' said Sophy.

'Don't you know,' said Ulick O'More, who was playing with the little Awk in the window, 'that the feminine mind loves expedients? It would be less commonplace to confide the parcel to the conductor, than merely let him receive it as guard of the mail bag and servant of the public.'

'Exactly,' laughed G  n  vi  e. 'Think of the moral influence of being selected as bearer of a token of tenderness to my aunt on her f  te, instead of being treated as a mere machine, devoid of human sympathies.'

'Sophy, where were we reading of a nation which gives the simplest transaction the air of a little romance?' said Ulick.

'And I have heard of a nation which denudes every action of sentiment, and leaves you the tree without the leaves,' was G  n  vi  e's retort.

'That misses fire, Miss Durant; my nation does everything by the soul, nothing by mechanism.'

'When they *do* do it.'

'That's a defiance. You must deprive the conductor of the moral influence, whether as man or machine, and entrust the parcel to me.'

'That would be like chartering a steamer to send home a Chinese puzzle.'

'No, indeed; I must go to Hadminster. Bear me witness, Sophy, Miss Goldsmith wants me to talk to the house agent.'

'Mind, if you miss St. Leocadia's day, you will miss my aunt's fête.'

Mr. O'More succeeded in carrying off the little parcel. The next morning, as the ladies were descending the hill, a hurried step came after them, and the curate said in an abrupt rapid manner, 'I beg your pardon, I was going to Hadminster; could I do anything for you?'

'Nothing, thank you,' said Albinia, at whom he looked.

'Did I not hear—Miss Durant had some work to send her aunt to-day?'

'How did you know that, Mr. Hope?' exclaimed G  n  vi  ve.

'I heard something pass, when some one was admiring your work,' he said, not looking at her. 'And this—I think—is St. Leocadia's day.'

'I am much obliged to you for remembering it, but I have sent my little parcel otherwise, so I need not trouble you.'

'Ah! how stupid in me! I am very sorry. I beg your pardon;' and he hurried off, looking as if very sorry were not a mere matter of course.

'Poor man,' thought Albinia, 'I dare say he has reckoned on it all this time, and hunted out St. Leocadia in Alban Butler, and then tried to screw up his courage all yesterday. Ulick has managed to traverse a romance; but perhaps it is just as well, for what would be the effect on the public of Mr. Hope in *that* coat being seen ringing at the convent door?'

'Well, Miss Durant,' said Ulick, entering the drawing-room in the winter twilight, 'here is evidence for you!'

'You have actually penetrated the convent, and seen my aunt? Impossible! and yet this pencilled note is her own dear writing!'

‘You don’t mean that you really were let in!’ cried Sophy.

‘I entered quite legitimately, I assure you. It was all luck. I’d just been putting up at the Crown, when what should I see in a sort of a trance, staring right into the inn-yard, but as jolly-looking a priest as ever held a station. “An’ it’s long since I’ve seen the like of you,” says he aloud to himself. “Is it the car?” says I. “Sure it is,” says he. “I’ve not laid my eyes on so iligant a vehicle since I left County Tyrone.”’

‘Mr. O’Hara!’ exclaimed G  nevi  ve.

‘“And I’m mistaken if you’re not the master of it,” he goes on, taking the measure of me all over,’ continued Ulick, putting on his drollest brogue. ‘You see he had too much manners to say that such a personable young gentleman, speaking such correct English, could be no other than an Irishman; so I made my bow, and said the car and I were both from County Galway, and we were straight as good friends as if we’d hunted together at Ballymakilty. To be sure, he was a little taken aback when he found I was one of the Protestant branch of the O’Mores, but a countryman is a countryman in a barbarous land, and he asked me to call upon him, and offered to do me any service in his power.’

‘I am sure he would. He is the kindest old gentleman I know,’ exclaimed G  nevi  ve. ‘He always used to bring me barley sugar-drops when I was a little girl, and it was he who found out our poor Biddy in distress at Hadminster, and sent her to live with us.’

‘Indeed! Then I owe him another debt of gratitude—in fact, he told me that one of his flock, meaning Biddy, had spoken to him honourably of me. “Well,” said I, “the greatest service you could do me, sir, would be to introduce me to Mademoiselle Belmarch  ; I have a young lady’s commission for her.” “From my little G  nevi  ve,” he said, “the darling that she is. Did you leave the child well?” And so when I said it was a present for her saint’s day, and that your heart was set on it—’

‘But, Mr. O’More, I never did set my heart on your seeing her.’

‘Well, well, you would have done it if you’d known there had been any chance of it; besides your heart was set on her getting the work, and how could I make sure of that unless I gave it into her own hand? I wouldn’t have put it into Mr. O’Hara’s snuffy pocket to hinder myself from being bankrupt.’

‘Then he took you in?’

‘So he did, like an honest Irishman as he was. He rang at the bell, and spoke to the portress, and had me into the parlour and sent up for the lady; and I have seldom spent a pleasanter half-hour. Mademoiselle Belmarché bade me tell you that she would write fuller thanks to you another day, and that her eyes would thank you every night.’

‘Was her cold gone? Did she seem well, the dear aunt?’

Géneviève was really grateful, and had many questions to ask about her aunt, which met with detailed answers.

‘By-the-by,’ said Ulick, ‘I met Mr. Hope in the street as I was coming away, I offered him a lift, but he said he was not coming home till late. I wonder what he is doing.’

Albinia and Sophy exchanged glances, and had almost said, ‘Poor Mr. Hope!’ It is very hard that the good fortune and mere good nature of an indifferent person should push him where the quiet curate so much wished to be. Albinia would have liked to have had either a little impudence or a little tact to enable her to give a hint to Ulick to be less officious.

St. Leocadia’s feast was the 9th of December. Three days after, Géneviève received a letter which made her change countenance, and hurry to her own room, whence she did not emerge till luncheon-time.

In the late afternoon, there was a knock at the drawing-room door, and Mr. Dusautoy said, ‘Can I speak with you a minute, Mrs. Kendal?’

Dreading ill news of Lucy, she hurried to the morning-room with him.

‘Fanny said I had better speak to you. This poor fellow is in a dreadful state.’

‘Algernon?’

‘No, indeed. Poor Hope! What has possessed the girl?’

‘Généviève has not refused him?’

‘Did you not know it? I found him in his rooms as white as a sheet! I asked what was the matter; he begged me to let him go away for one Sunday, and find him a substitute. I saw how it was, and at the first word he broke down and told me.’

‘Was this to-day?’

‘Yes. What can the silly little puss be thinking of to put an excellent fellow like that to so much pain? Going about it in such an admirable way, too, writing to old Mamselle first, and getting a letter from her which he sends with his own, and promising to guarantee her fifty pounds a year out of his own pocket. ‘I should like to know what that little Jenny means by it. I gave her credit for more sense.’

‘Perhaps she thinks, under the circumstances of her coming here, within the year—’

‘Ah! very proper, very pretty of her; I never thought of that; I suppose I have your permission to tell Hope?’

‘I believe all the town knew it,’ said Albinia.

‘Yes; he need not be downhearted, he has only to be patient, and he will like her the better for it. After all, though he is as good a man as breathes, he cannot be Gilbert, and it will be a great relief to him. I’ll tell him to put all his fancies about O’More out of his head.’

‘Most decidedly,’ said Albinia; ‘nothing can be greater nonsense. Tell him by no means to go away, for when she finds that our feelings are not hurt, and has become used to the idea, I have every hope that she will be able to form a new—’

‘Ay, ay; poor Gilbert would have wished it himself. It is very good of you, Mrs. Kendal; I’ll put the poor fellow in spirits again.’

‘Did you hear whether she gave any reasons?’

‘Oh! I don’t know—something about her birth and station; but that’s stuff—she’s a perfect lady, and much more.’

‘And he is only a bookseller’s son.’

‘True; and though it might be awkward to have the parson’s father-in-law cutting capers if he lived in the same town, yet being dead these fifteen or eighteen years, where’s the damage?’

‘Was that all?’

‘I fancy that she said she never meant to marry; but that’s all nonsense; she is the very girl that ought, and I hope you will talk to her and bring her to reason. There’s not a couple in the whole place that I should be so glad to marry as those two.’

Albinia endeavoured to discuss the matter with G  nevi  ve that night when they went upstairs. It was not easy to do, for G  nevi  ve seemed resolved to wish her good-night outside her door, but she made her entrance, and putting her arm round her little friend’s waist, said, ‘Am I very much in your way, my dear? I thought you might want a little help, or at least a little talk.’

‘Oh! Mrs. Kendal, I hoped you did not know!’ and her eyes filled with tears.

‘Mr. Dusautoy told me, my dear; poor Mr. Hope’s distress betrayed him, and Mr. Dusautoy was anxious I should—’

G  nevi  ve did not let her finish, but exclaiming, ‘I did not expect this from you, madame,’ gave way to a shower of tears.

‘My dear child, do we not all feel you the more one with ourselves for this reluctance?’ said Albinia, caressing her fondly. ‘It shall not be forced upon you any more till you can bear it.’

‘Till!’ exclaimed G  nevi  ve, alarmed. ‘Oh! do not say that! Do not hold out false hopes! I never shall!’

‘I do not think you are a fair judge as yet, my dear.’

‘I think I am,’ said G  nevi  ve, slowly; ‘I must not let you love me on false pretences, dearest Mrs. Kendal. I do not think it is all for—for *his* sake—but indeed, though I must esteem Mr. Hope, I do not believe I could ever feel for him as—’ then breaking off. ‘I pray you, with all my heart, dearest friend, never to speak to me of marriage. I am the little governess, and while Heaven gives

me strength to work for my aunt, and you let me call this my home, I am content, I am blessed. Oh! do not disturb and unsettle me!’

So imploringly did she speak, that she obliterated all thought of the prudent arguments with which Albinia had come stored. It was no time for them; there was no possibility of endeavouring to dethrone the memory of her own Gilbert; and her impulse was far more to agree that no one else could ever be loved, than to argue in favour of a new attachment. She was proud of Gilbert for being thus recollected, and doubly pleased with the widowed heart; nor was it till the first effect of G  n  vi  ve’s tears had passed off that she began to reflect that the idea might become familiar, and that romance having been abundantly satisfied by the constancy of the Lancer, sober esteem might be the basis of very happy married affection.

Mr. Hope did not go away, but he shrank into himself, and grew more timid than ever, and it was through the Dusautoys that Albinia learnt that he was much consoled, and intended to wait patiently. He had written to Mdlle. Belmarch  , who had been extremely disappointed, and continued to believe that so excellent and well brought up a young girl as her niece would not resist her wishes with regard to a young pastor so respectable.

Sophy, when made aware of what was going on, did not smile or shed a tear, only a strange whiteness came across her face. She made a commonplace remark with visible effort, nor was she quite herself for some time. It was as if the reference to her brother had stirred up the old wound. G  n  vi  ve seemed to have been impelled to manifest her determination of resuming her occupation, she wrote letters vigorously, answered advertisements, and in spite of the united protest of her friends, advertised herself as a young person of French extraction, but a member of the Church of England, accustomed to tuition, and competent to instruct in French, Italian, music, and all the ordinary branches of Education. Address, G. C. D., Mr. Richardson’s, bookseller, Bayford.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS GOLDSMITH went to spend Christmas with an old friend, leaving Ulick more liberty than he had enjoyed for a long time. He used it a good deal at Willow Lawn, and was there of course on Christmas-day. After dinner, the decoration of the church was under discussion. The Bayford neighbourhood was unpropitious to holly, and Sophy and G  nevi  ve had hardly ever seen any, except that G  nevi  ve remembered the sooty bits sold in London. Something passed about sending for a specimen from Fairmead, but Albinia said that would not answer, for her brother's children were in despair at the absence of berries, and had ransacked Colonel Bury's plantations in vain.

The next day, about twilight, Albinia and Sophy were arranging some Christmas gifts for the old women, in the morning-room; G  nevi  ve was to come and help them on her return from the child in Tibbs's Alley.

'Oh! here she comes, up the garden,' said Sophy, who was by the window.

Presently Albinia heard a strange sound as of tightened breath, and looking up saw Sophy deathly pale, with her eyes fixed on the window. In terror she flew to her side, but Sophy spoke not, she only clutched her hand with fingers cold and tight as iron, and gazed with dilated eyes. Albinia looked—

Ulick had come from the house—there was a scarlet-berried spray in G  nevi  ve's hand, which she was trying to make him take again—his face was all pleading and imploring—she turned hastily from him, and they saw her cheek glowing with crimson—she tried to force back the holly spray—but her hand was caught—he was kissing it. No; she had rent it away—she had fled in through the conservatory—they heard the doors—she had rushed up to her own room.

Sophy's grasp grew more rigid—she panted for breath.

'My child! my child!' said Albinia, throwing her arms round her, expecting her to faint. 'Oh! could I

have imagined such treason?' Her eyes flashed, and her frame quivered with indignation. 'He shall never come into this house again!'

'Mamma! hush!' said Sophy, releasing herself from her embrace, and keeping her body upright, though obliged to seat herself on the nearest chair. 'It is not treason,' she said slowly, as though her mouth were parched.

'Contemptible fickleness!' burst out Albinia; but Sophy implored silence by a gesture.

'No,' she said; 'it was a dream, a degrading, humiliating dream; but it is over.'

'There is no degradation except to the base trifier I once thought better things of.'

'He has not trifled,' said Sophy. 'Wait! hush!'

There was a composure about her that awed Albinia, who stood watching in suspense while she went to the bedroom, drank some water, cooled her brow, pushed back her hair, and sitting down again in the same collected manner, which gave her almost a look of majesty, she said, 'Promise me, mamma, that all shall go on as if this folly had never crossed our minds.'

'I can't! I can't, Sophy!' said Albinia in the greatest agitation. 'I can't *unknow* that you have been shamefully used.'

'Then you will lead papa to break his promise to G  n  vi  re, and lower me not only in my own eyes, but in those of every one.'

'He little knew that he was bringing her here to destroy his daughter's happiness. So that was why she held off from Mr. Hope,' cried Albinia, burning with such indignation, that on some one she must expend it, but a tirade against the artfulness of the little French witch was cut off short by an authoritative—

'Don't, mamma! You are unjust! How can she help being loveable?'

'He had no business to know whether she was or not.'

'You are wrong, mamma. The absurdity was in thinking I ever was so.'

'Very little absurd,' said Albinia, twining her arms round Sophy.

'Don't make me silly,' hastily said Sophy, her voice trembling for a moment; 'I want to tell you all about it, and you will see that no one is to blame. The perception has been growing on me for a long time, but I was weak enough to indulge in the dream. It was very sweet!' There again she struggled not to break down, gained the victory, and went on, 'I don't think I should have dared to imagine it myself, but I saw others thought it, who knew more; I knew the incredible was sometimes true, and every little kindness he did—Oh! how foolish! as if he could help doing kindnesses! My better sense told me he did not really distinguish me; but there was something that *would* feed upon every word and look. Then last year I was wakened by the caricature business. That opened my eyes, for no one who had *that* in him would have turned my sister into derision. I was sullen then and proud, and when—when humanity and compassion brought him to me in my distress—oh! why—why could not I have been reasonable, and not have selfishly fed on what I thought was revived?'

'He had no right—' began Albinia, fiercely.

'He could neither help saving Maurice, nor speaking comfort and support when he found me exhausted and sinking. It was I who was the foolish creature—I hate myself! Well, you know how it has been—I liked to believe it was *the thing*—I knew he cared less for me than—but I thought it was always so between men and women, and that I would not have petty distrusts. But when she came, I saw what the true—true feeling is—I saw that he felt when she came into the room—I saw how he heard her words and missed mine—I saw—' Sophy collected herself, and 'spoke quietly and distinctly, 'I saw his love, and that it had never been for me.'

There was a pause; Albinia could not bear to look, speak, or move. Sophy's words carried conviction that swept away her sand castle.

'Now, mamma,' said Sophy, earnestly, 'you own that he has not been false or fickle.'

'If he has not, he has disregarded the choicest jewel that lay in his way,' said Albinia with some sharpness.

‘But he has not been *that*,’ persisted Sophy.

‘Well—no; I suppose not.’

‘And no one can be less to blame than G  n  vi  re.’

‘Little flirt, I’ve no patience with her.’

‘She can’t help her manners,’ repeated Sophy; ‘I feel them so much more charming than mine every moment. She will make him so happy.’

‘What are you talking of, Sophy? He must be mad if he is in earnest. A man of his family pride! His father will never listen to it for a moment.’

‘I don’t know what his father may do,’ said Sophy; ‘but I know what I pray and entreat we may do, and that is, do our utmost to make this come to good.’

‘Sophy, don’t ask it. I could not, I know you could not.’

‘There is no loss of esteem. I honour him as I always did,’ said Sophy. ‘Yes, the more since I see it was all for papa and the right, all unselfish, on that 5th of November. Some day I shall have worn out the selfishness.’

She kept her hand tightly pressed on her heart as she spoke, and Albinia exclaimed, ‘You shall not see it; you overrate your strength; it is my business to prevent you!’

‘Think, mamma,’ said Sophy, rising in her earnestness. ‘Here is a homeless orphan, whom you have taught to love you, whom papa has brought here as to a home and for Gilbert’s sake. Is it fair—innocent, exemplary as she is—to turn against her because she is engaging and I am not, to cut her off from us, drive her away to the first situation that offers, be it what it may, and with *that* thought aching and throbbing in her heart? Oh, mamma! would that be mercy or justice?’

‘You are not asking to have it encouraged in the very house with you!’

‘I do not see how else it is to be,’ said Sophy.

‘Let him go after her, if there’s anything in it but Irish folly and French coquetry—’

‘How, mamma? Where? When she is a governess in some strange place? How could he leave his business?’

How could she attend to him? Oh, mamma! you used to be kind: how can you wish to put two people you love so much to such misery?'

'Because I can't put one whom I love better than both, and who deserves it, to greater misery,' said Albinia, embracing her.

'Then do not put me to the misery of being ungenerous, and the shame of having my folly suspected.'

Albinia would have argued still, but the children came in, Sophy went away, and there was no possibility of a *tête-à-tête*. How strange it was to have such a tumult of feeling within, and know that the same must be tenfold multiplied in the hearts of those two girls, and yet go through all the domestic conventionalities, each wearing a mask of commonplace ease, as though nothing had happened!

Géneviève had, Albinia suspected, been crying excessively; for there was that effaced, annihilated appearance that tears produced on her, but otherwise she did her part in answering her host, who was very fond of her, and always made her an object of attention. Albinia found herself betraying more abstraction, she was so anxiously watching Sophy, who acquitted herself best of all, had kept tears from her eyes, talked more than usual, and looked brilliant, with a bright colour dyeing her cheeks. She was evidently sustained by eagerness to obtain her generous purpose, and did not yet realize the price.

The spray of holly was lying as if it had been tossed in vexation upon the marble slab in the hall. Albinia, from the stairs, saw Sophy take it up, and waited to see what she would do with it. The Sophy she had once known would have dashed it into the flames, and then have repented. No! Sophy held it tenderly, and looked at the glossy leaves and coral fruit with no angry eye; she even raised it to her lips, but it was to pierce with one of the long prickles till her brow drew together at the smart, and the blood started. Then she began to mount the stairs, and meeting Albinia, said quietly, 'I was going to take this to Géneviève's room; it is empty

now, but perhaps you had better take care of it for her, out of sight. It will be her greatest treasure to-morrow.'

Mr. Kendal read aloud, as usual, but who of his audience attended? Certainly not Albinia. She sat with her head bent over her work, revolving the history of these last two years, and trying to collect herself after the sudden shock, and the angry feelings of disappointment that surged within, in much need of an object of wrath. Alas! who could that object be but that blind, warm-hearted, impulsive Mistress Albinia Kendal?

She saw plain enough, now it was too late, that there had not been a shadow of sentiment in that lively confiding Irishman, used to intimacy with a herd of cousins, and viewing all connexions as cousins. She remembered his conversation with her brother and her brother's impression; she thought of the unloverlike dread of ague in Emily's moonlight walk; she recalled the many occasions when she had thought him remiss, and she could not but acquit him of any designed flirtation, any dangerous tenderness or what Mdlle. Belmarché would call *legreté*. He could not be reserved—he was naturally free and open—and how could she have put such a construction on his frankness, when Sophy herself had long been gradually arriving at a conviction of the truth! It was a comfort at least to remember that it had not been the fabrication of her own brain; she had respectable authority for the idea, and she trusted to its prompter to participate in her indignation, argue Ulick out of so poor match, and at least put a decided veto upon Sophy's Spartan magnanimity—Sophy's health and feelings being the subject, she sometimes thought, which concerned him above all.

Ah! but the evil had not been his doing. He had but gossiped out a pleasant conjecture to his wife as a trustworthy help-meet. What business had she to go and telegraph that conjecture, with her significant eyes, to the very last person who ought to have shared it, and then to have kept up the mischief by believing it herself, and acting, looking, and arranging, as a certainty implied, though not expressed? Mrs. Osborne or Mrs. Drury

might have spoken more broadly ; they could not have acted worse, thought she to herself.

The notion might never have been suggested ; Sophy might have simply enjoyed these years of intimacy, and even if her heart had been touched, it would have been unconsciously, and the pain and shame of unrequited affection have merely been a slight sense of neglect, a small dreariness, lost in eagerness for the happiness of both friends. Now, two years of love that she had been allowed to imagine returned and sanctioned, and love with the depth and force of Sophy's whole nature—the shame of having loved unasked, the misery of having lived in a delusion—how would they act upon a being of her morbid tendency, frail constitution, and proud spirit ? As Albinia thought of the passive endurance of last year's estrangement, her heart sank within her ! Illness—brain-fever—permanent ill-health and crushed spirits—nay, death itself she augured—and all—all her own fault ! The last and best of Edmund's children so cruelly and deeply wounded, and by her folly ! She longed to throw herself at his feet and ask his pardon, but it was Sophy's secret as well as hers, and how could womanhood betray that unrequited love ? At least she thought, for noble Sophy's sake, she would not raise a finger to hinder the marriage ; but as to forwarding it, or promoting the courtship under Sophy's very eyes—that would be like murdering her outright ; and she would join Mr. Kendal with all her might in removing their daughter from the trying spectacle. Talk of Aunt Maria ! This trouble was ten thousand times worse !

Albinia began to watch the timepiece, longing to have the evening over, that she might prepare Mr. Kendal. It ended at last, and G  nevi  ve took up her candle, bade good-night, and disappeared. Sophy lingered, till coming forward to her father as he stood by the fire, she said, ' Papa, did you not promise Gilbert that G  nevi  ve should be as another daughter ?

' I wish she would be, my dear,' said Mr. Kendal ; ' but she is too independent, and your mamma thinks she

would consider it as a mere farce to call her little Albinia's governess; but if you can persuade her—'

'What I want you to do, papa, is to promise that she shall be married from this house, as her home, and that you will fit her out as you did Lucy.'

'Ha? Is she beginning to relent?'

'No, papa. It will be Ulick O'More.'

'You don't mean it!' exclaimed Mr. Kendal, more taken by surprise than perhaps he had ever been, and looking at his wife, who was standing dismayed, yet admiring the gallant girl who had forestalled her precautions. Obligated to speak, she said, 'I am afraid so; Sophy and I witnessed a scene to-day.'

'Afraid!' said Mr. Kendal; 'I see no reason to be afraid, if Ulick likes it. They are two of the most agreeable and best people that ever fell in my way, and I shall be delighted if they can arrange it, for they are perfectly suited to each other.'

'But such a match!' exclaimed Albinia.

'As to that, a sensible, economical wife will be worth more to him than an expensive one, with however large a fortune. And for the family pride, I am glad the lad has more sense than I feared; he has a full right to please himself, having won the place he has, and he may *make* his father consent. He wants a wife—nothing else will keep him from running headlong into speculation, for want of something to do. Yes; I see what you are thinking of, my dear; but you know we could not wish her, as you said yourself, never to form another attachment.'

'But *here!*' sighed Albinia, the ground knocked away from under her, yet still clinging to the last possible form of murmur.

'It will cost us something,' said Mr. Kendal, 'but no more than we will cheerfully bear, for the sake of one who has such claims upon us; and it will be amply repaid by having such a pair of friends settled close to us.'

'Then you will, papa?' said Sophy.

'Will do what, my dear?'

'Treat her as—as you did Lucy, papa.'

‘And with much more pleasure, and far more hope, than when we fitted out poor Lucy,’ said Mr. Kendal.

Sophy thanked him, and said ‘Good-night;’ and the look which accompanied her kiss to her step-mother was a binding over to secrecy and non-interference.

‘Is she gone?’ said Mr. Kendal, who had been musing after his last words. ‘Gone to tell her friend, I suppose? I wanted to ask what this scene was.’

‘Oh!’ said Albinia, ‘it was in the garden—we saw it from the window—only he brought her a bit of holly, and was trying to kiss her hand.’

‘Strong premises, certainly. How did she receive the advance?’

‘She would not listen, but made her escape.’

‘Then matters are not in such a state of progress as for me to congratulate her? I suppose you ladies are the best judges whether he may not meet with the same fate as poor Hope?’

‘Sophy seems to take it for granted that he will not.’

‘Irishman as he is, he must be pretty secure of his ground before coming to such strong measures. Well! I hope we may hear no more of brow-ague. But—’ with sudden recollection—‘I thought, Albinia, you fancied he had some inclination for Sophy?’

Was it not a good wife to suppress the ‘You did’? If she could merrily have said, ‘You told me so,’ it would have been all very well; but her mood would admit of nothing but a grave and guarded answer—‘We did fancy so, but I am convinced it was entirely without reason.’

That superior smile at her lively imagination was more than human nature could bear, without the poor relief of an entreaty that he would not sit meditating, and go to sleep in his chair.

Albinia thought she had recovered equanimity during her night’s rest; but in the midst of her morning toilette, Sophy hurried in, exclaiming, ‘She’ll go away! She is writing letters and packing!’ and she answered, ‘Well, what do you want me to do? You don’t imagine that I can rush into her room and lay hands on her? She will not go upon a wishing-carpet. It will be time to interfere when we know more of the matter.’

Sophy looked blank, and vanished, and Albinia felt excessively vexed at having visited on the chief sufferer her universal crossness with all mankind. She knew she had only spoken common sense, but that made it doubly hateful; and yet she could not but wish Miss Durant anywhere out of sight, and Mr. O'More on the top of the Hill of Howth.

At breakfast, Sophy's looks betrayed nothing to the uninitiated, though Albinia detected a feverish restlessness and covert impatience, and judged that her sleep had been little. G  nevi  ve's had perhaps been less, for she was very sallow, with sunken eyes, and her face looked half its usual size; but Albinia could not easily have compassion on the poor little unwitting traitress, even when she began, 'Dear Mrs. Kendal, will you excuse me if I take a sudden leave? I find it will answer best for me to accept Mrs. Elwood's invitation; I can then present myself to any lady who may wish to see me, and, as I promised my aunt another visit, I had better go to Hadminster by the three o'clock omnibus.'

Albinia was thankful for the loud opposition which drowned the faint reluctance of her own; Mr. Kendal insisting that she should not leave them; little Awk coaxing her; and Maurice exclaiming, 'If the ladies want her, let them come after her! One always goes to see a horse.'

'I'm not so well worth the trouble, Maurice.'

'I know Ulick O'More *would* come in to see you when all the piebalds for the show were going by!'

'Some day you will come to the same good taste,' said his father, to lessen the general confusion.

'See a lady instead of a piebald? Never!' cried Maurice with indignation, that made the most preoccupied laugh; under cover of which G  nevi  ve effected a retreat. Sophy looked imploringly at Albinia—Albinia was moving, but not with alacrity, and Mr. Kendal was saying, 'I do not understand all this, when, scarcely pausing to knock, Ulick opened the door, cheeks and eyes betraying scarcely suppressed eagerness.

'What—where,' he stammered, as if even his words were startled away; 'is not Miss Durant well?'

'She was here just this moment,' said Mr. Kendal.

'I will go and see for her,' said Sophy. 'Come, children.'

Whether Sophy's powers over herself or over Gèneviève would avail, was an anxious marvel; but it did not last a moment, for Maurice came clattering down to say that Gèneviève was gone out into the town. In such a moment? She must have snatched up her bonnet, and fled one way while Ulick entered by the other. He made one step forward, exclaiming, 'Where is she gone?' then pausing, broke out, 'Mrs. Kendal, you must make her give me a hearing, or I shall go mad!'

'A hearing?' repeated Mrs. Kendal, with slight malice.

'Yes; why, don't you know?'

'So your time has come, Ulick, has it?' said Mr. Kendal.

'Well, and I were worse than an old ledger if it had not, when she was before me! Make her listen to me, Mrs. Kendal; if she do not, I shall never do any more good in this world!'

'I should have thought,' said Albinia, 'that an Irishman would be at no loss for making opportunities.'

'You don't know, Mrs. Kendal; she is so fenced in with scruples, humility—I know not what—that she will not so much as hear me out. I'm not such a blockhead as to think myself worthy of her; but I do think, if she would only listen to me, I might stand a chance: and she runs off, as if she thought it a sin to hear a word from my mouth!'

'It is very honourable to her,' said Mr. Kendal.

'Very honourable to her,' replied Ulick, 'but cruelly hard upon me.'

'I think, too,' continued Mr. Kendal, stimulated thereto by his lady's severely prudent looks, 'that you ought—granting Miss Durant to be, as I well know her to be, one of the most excellent persons who ever lived—still to count the cost of opening such an affair. It is not fair upon a woman to bring her into a situation where disappointments may arise which neither may be able to bear.'

‘Do you mean my family, Mr. Kendal? Trust me for getting consent from home. You will write my father a letter, saying what you said just now; Mrs. Kendal will write another to my mother; and I’ll just let them see my heart is set on it, and they’ll not hold out.’

‘Could you bear to see her—looked down on?’ said Albinia.

‘Ha?’ he cried, with flashing eyes. ‘No, believe me, Mrs. Kendal, the O’Mores have too much gentle blood to do like that, even if she were one whom any one could scorn. Why, what is my mother herself but a Goldsmith by birth, and I’d like to see who would cast it up to any of the family that she was not as noble as an O’More? And G  nevi  ve herself—isn’t every look and every movement full of the purest gentility her fathers’ land can show?’

‘I dare say, once accepted, the O’Mores would heartily receive her; but here, in this place, there are some might think it told against you, and might make her uncomfortable.’

‘What care I? I’ve lived and thriven under Bayford scorn many a day. And for her—Oh! I defy anything so base to wound a heart so high as hers, and with me to protect her!’

‘And you can afford it?’ said Mr. Kendal. ‘Remember she has her aunt to maintain.’

‘I can,’ said Ulick. ‘I have gone over it all again and again;’ and recalling his man-of-business nature, he demonstrated that even at present he was well able to support Mdlle. Belmarch  , as well as to begin housekeeping, and that there was every reason to believe that his wider and more intelligent system of management would continue to increase his income.

‘Well, Ulick,’ said Mr. Kendal at last, ‘I wish you success with all my heart, and esteem you for a choice so entirely founded upon the qualities most certain to ensure happiness.’

‘You don’t mean to say that she has not the most glorious eyes, the most enchanting figure!’ exclaimed Ulick, affronted at the compliment that seemed to aver

that G  n  vi  re's external charms were not equal to her sterling merit.

Mr. Kendal and Albinia laughed ; and the former excused himself, not quite to the lover's satisfaction, by declaring the lady much more attractive than many regularly handsome people ; but he added, that what he meant was, that he was sure the attachment was built upon a sound foundation. Then he entreated that Mrs. Kendal would persuade her to listen to him, for she had fled from him ever since his betrayal of his sentiments till he was half crazed, and had been walking up and down his room all night. He should do something distracted, if not relieved from suspense before night ! And Mr. Kendal got rid of him in the midst of his transports, and turning to Albinia said, ' We must settle this as fast as possible, or he will lose his head, and get into a scrape.'

' I do not like such wild behaviour. It is not dignified.'

' It is only temperament,' said Mr. Kendal.

' Will you speak to her ?'

' Yes, whenever she comes in.'

' I suspect she has gone out on purpose. Could you not go to find her at the school, or wherever she is likely to be ?'

' I don't know where to find her. I cannot give up the children's lessons. Nothing hurts Maurice so much as irregularity.'

He made no answer, but his look of disappointment excited her to observe to herself that she supposed he expected her to run all over the town without ordering dinner first, and she wondered how he would like that !

Presently she heard him go out at the front door, and felt some contrition.

She had not the heart to seek Sophy to report progress, and did not see her till about eleven o'clock, when she came in hastily with her bonnet on, asking, ' Well, mamma ?'

' Where have you been, Sophy ?'

' To school,' she said. ' Has anything happened ?'

'We have had it out, and I am to speak to her when she comes in,' said Albinia, glad as perhaps was Sophy of the enigmatical form to which Maurice's presence restrained the communication.

Sophy went away, but presently returning and taking up her work, but with eyes that betrayed how she was listening; but there was so entire an apparent absence of personal suffering, that Albinia began to discharge the weight from her mind, and believe that the sentiment had been altogether imaginary even on Sophy's side, and the whole a marvellous figment of her own.

At last, Mr. Kendal's foot was heard; Sophy started up, and sat down again. He came upstairs, and his face was all smiles. 'Well,' he said, 'I don't think she will go by the three o'clock omnibus.'

'You have spoken to her?' cried Albinia in compunction.

'Has Maurice finished? Then go out, my boy, for the present.'

'Well?' said Albinia, interrogatively, and Sophy laid down her work and crossed one hand over the other on her knees, and leant back as though to hinder visible tremor.

'Yes,' he said, going on with what had been deferred till Maurice was gone. 'I thought it hard on him—and as I was going to speak to Edwards, I asked if she were at the Union, where I found her, taking leave of the old women, and giving them little packets of snuff, and small presents, chiefly her own work, I am sure. I took her with me into the fields, and persuaded her at last to talk it over with me. Poor little thing! I never saw a more high-minded, conscientious spirit; she was very unhappy about it, and said she knew it was all her unfortunate manner; she wished to be guarded, but a little excitement and conversation always turned her head; and she entreated me not to hinder her going back to a school-room, out of the way of every one. I told her that she must not blame herself for being more than usually agreeable; but she would not listen, and I could hardly bring her to attend to what I said of young O'More.'

Poor girl ! I believe she was running away from her own heart.'

'You have prevented her?' cried Sophy.

'At least I have induced her to hear his arguments. I told her my opinion of him, which was hardly needed, and what I thought might have more weight—that he has earned the right to please himself, and that I believed she would be better for him than riches. She repeated several times "Not now," and "Not here;" and I found that she was shocked at the idea of the subject being brought before us. I was obliged to tell her that nothing would gratify any of us so much, and that this was the time to fulfil her promise of considering me as a father.'

'Oh, thank you,' murmured Sophy.

'So finally I convinced her that she owed Ulick a hearing, and I think she felt that to hear was to yield. She had certainly been feeling that flight was the only measure, and between her dread of entrapping him and of hurting our feelings, had persuaded herself it was her duty. The last thing she did was to catch hold of me as I was going, and ask if he knew what her father was.'

'I dare say it has been the first thing she has said to him,' said Albinia. 'She is a noble little creature ! But what have you done with them now?'

'I brought him to her in the parsonage garden. I believe they are walking in the lanes,' said Mr. Kendal, much gratified with his morning's work.

'She deserves him,' said Sophy ; and then her eyes became set, as if looking into far distance.

The walk in the lanes had not ended by luncheon-time, and an afternoon loaded with callers was oppressive, but Sophy kept up well. At last, in the twilight, the door was heard to open, and G  nevi  ve came in alone. They listened, and knew she must have run up to her own room. What did it portend ? Albinia must be the one to go and see ; so after a due interval, she went up and knocked. G  nevi  ve opened the door, and threw herself into her arms. 'Dear Mrs. Kendal ! Oh ! have I done wrong ? I am so very happy, and I cannot help it !'

Albinia kissed her, and assured her she had done nothing to repent of.

'I am so glad you think so. I never dreamt such happiness could be meant for me, and I am afraid lest I should have been selfish and wrong, and bring trouble on him.'

'We have been all saying you deserve him.'

'Oh no—no—so good, so noble, so heroic as he is. How could he think of the poor little French teacher! And he will pay my aunt's fifty pounds! I told him all, and he knew it before, and yet he loves me! Oh! why are people so very good to me?'

'I could easily find an answer to that question,' said Albinia. 'Where is he, my dear?'

'He is gone home. I would not come into the town with him. It is nothing, you know; no one must hear of it, for he must be free unless his parents consent—and I know they never can,' she said, shaking her head, sadly; 'but even then I shall have one secret of happiness—I shall know what has been! But oh! Mrs. Kendal, let me go away—'

'Go away now?' exclaimed Albinia.

'Yes—it cannot be—here, in this house! Oh! it is outraging your kindness.'

'No,' said Albinia; 'it is but letting us fulfil a very precious charge.'

Géneviève's tears flowed as she said, 'Such goodness! Mr. Kendal spoke to me in this way in the morning, when he was more kind and patient than I can express. But tell me, dearest madame, tell me candidly, is my remaining here the cause of any secret pain to him?'

With regard to him, Albinia could answer sincerely that it was a gratification; and Géneviève owned that she should be glad to await the letters from Ireland, which she tried to persuade herself she believed would put an end to everything, except the precious remembrance.

Sophy here came in with some tea. She had recollected that Géneviève had wandered all day without any bodily sustenance. There was great sweetness in the quiet, grave manner in which she bent over her friend and kissed her brow. All she said was, 'Papa has gone

to fetch him to dinner. G  nevi  ve, you must let me do your hair.'

It was in G  nevi  ve's eyes an astonishing fancy, and Albinia said, 'Come away now, my dear; she must have a thorough rest after such a day.'

G  nevi  ve looked too much excited for rest, but that was the more reason for leaving her to herself; and besides, it was so uncomfortable not to be able to be kind enough.

However, when people are happy, a little kindness goes a great way; and there was a subdued lustre like a glory in her eyes when she came downstairs, with the holly leaves and berries glistening in her hair, the first ornament she had ever worn there.

'It was Sophy's doing,' she said. 'Naughty girl; she tried to take me by surprise. She would not let me look in the glass, but I guessed—and oh! she was wounding her poor hands so sadly.'

'I must thank her,' said Ulick, looking ecstatic. 'Why does she not come down?'

As she did not appear, Albinia went up, doubtful if it were wise, yet too uneasy not to go in quest of her.

It was startling to have so faint an answer on knocking, and on entering the room, she saw Sophy lying on her bed, upon her back, with her arms by her sides, and with a ghastly whiteness on her features.

Scarcely a pulse could be felt, and her hands were icy cold, her voice sank to nothing, her eyelids scarcely raised, as if the strain of the day had exhausted all vital warmth or energy, and her purpose accomplished, annihilation was succeeding. Much terrified, Albinia would have hurried in search of remedies, but she raised her hand imploringly, and murmured, 'Please don't. I'm not faint—I'm not ill. If you would only let me be still.'

Albinia teased her so far as to cover her with warmed shawls, and force on her a stimulant. She shut her eyes, but presently opened them to say, 'Please go.'

She was so often unable to appear at dinner, that no observation was made; and it was to be feared that her absence was chiefly regretted by the lovers, because it

prevented them from sitting on the same side of the table.

Always frank and unrestrained, Ulick made his felicity so apparent, that Albinia had no toleration for him, and not much for the amusement it afforded Mr. Kendal. She would have approved of her husband much more if he had put her into a great quandary by anxious inquiries what was the matter with his daughter, instead of that careless, 'O you are going up to Sophy; I hope she will be able to come down to tea,' when she left him on guard over the children and the lovers.

'So it is with woman's martyrdoms,' said she to herself as she walked upstairs, chewing the cud of all the commonplaces by which women have, of late years, flattered themselves, and been flattered; 'but at any rate I'll have her out of sight of all their absurdity. It is enough to kill her!'

Sophy hardly stirred at her entrance, but there was less ghastliness about her, and as Albinia sat down she did not remove her hand, and turned slightly round, so as to lose that strange corpse-like attitude of repose.

'You are not so cold, dearest,' said Albinia. 'Have you slept?'

'I think not.'

'Are you better? Have you been comfortable?'

'Oh yes.' Then, with a pause, 'Yes—it was like being nothing!'

'You were not faint, I hope?'

'No—only lying still. Don't you know the comfort of not thinking or feeling?'

'Yes; this has been far too much for you. You have done enough now, my generous Sophy.'

'Not generous; one can't give away what one never had.'

'I think it more gracious to yield without jealousy or bitterness—'

'Only not quite base,' said Sophy. Then presently, turning on her pillow as though more willing to converse, she said, 'I am glad it was not last year.'

'We had troubles enough then!'

‘Not for that—because I should have been base then, and hated myself for it all the time.’

‘That you never could have been!’ cried Albinia. ‘But, my dear, you must let me contrive for you; I would not betray you for all the world, but the sight of these two is more than you ought to undergo. I will not send Gèneviève away, but you must go from home.’

‘I don’t think I shall be cross,’ said poor Sophy, simply; ‘I should be ashamed.’

‘Cross! It is I who am cross, because I am to blame; but, dearest, think if you are keeping up out of pride; that will never, never do.’

‘I do not believe it is pride,’ said Sophy, meekly; ‘at least, I hope not. I feel humiliated enough, and I think it *may* be a sort of shame, as well as consideration for them, that would make me wish that no difference should be made. Do you not think we may let things go on?’ she said, in so humble a manner, that it brought Albinia’s tears, and a kiss was the only answer. ‘Please tell me,’ said Sophy; ‘for I don’t want to deceive myself.’

‘I am sure I am no judge,’ cried Albinia, ‘after the dreadful mischief I have done.’

‘The mischief was in me,’ said Sophy, ‘or you could not have done it. I saw it all when I was lying awake last night, and how it began, or rather it was before I can remember exactly. I always had craving after something—a yearning for something to fix myself on—and after I grew to read and look out into the world, I thought it must be *that*. And when I knew I was ugly and disagreeable, I brooded and brooded, and only in my better moments tried to be satisfied with you and papa and the children.’

‘And the All-satisfying, Sophy dear.’

‘I tried—I did—but it was duty—not heart. I used to fancy what might be, if I shot out into beauty and grace—not admiration, but to have that one thing to lean on. You see it was all worldly, and only submissive by fits—generally it was cross repining, yielding because I could not help it—and so, when the fancy came the throne was ready made, empty, swept, and garnished, for

the idol. I won't talk of all that time; but I don't believe even G  n  vi  ve, though she knows she may, can dwell upon the thought as I did, in just the way to bring punishment. And so I thought, by-and-by, at the caricature time, that I was punished. I looked into the fallacy, when I had got over the temper and the pride, and I saw it all clear, and owned I was rightly served, for it had been an earthly aim, and an idol worship. Well, the foolish hope came back again, but indeed, indeed, I think I was the better for all the chastening; I had seen grandmamma die, I was fresh from hearing of Gilbert, and I did feel as I never had done before, that God was first. I don't believe that feeling had passed, though the folly came back, and made me feel glad to love all the world. There were—gleams of religious thought—she spoke with difficulty, but her face had a strange beauty—'that taught me how, if I was more good—there could be a fulness of joy that all the rest flowed out from. And so when misgivings came, and I saw at times how little he could care for me—oh! it was pain enough, but not the worst sort. And yet I don't know—' She turned away and hid her face on the pillow. It was agony, though still, as she had said, not the worst, untempered by faith or resignation. What a history of that apparently cold, sullen, impassive spirit! what an unlocking of pent-up mysteries!

'It has been blessed to you,' said Albinia, affectionately: 'My dear, we always thought your character one that wanted the softening of such—an attachment. Perhaps that made me wrongly eager for it, and ready to imagine where I ought not; I think it did soften you; but if you had not conquered what was earthly and exaggerated in it, how it would be hardening and poisoning you now!'

'I hope I may have,' sighed Sophy, as if she were doubtful.

'Then will you not listen to me? You have done nobly so far, and I know your feelings will be right in the main; but do you think you can bear the perpetual irritation of being neglected, and seeing—what I *must* call rather a parade of his preference?'

'I think it would be the best cure,' said Sophy; 'it would make me feel it real, and I could be glad to see him—them—so happy—'

'I don't know how to judge! I don't know whether it be right for you to have him always before your mind.'

'He would be so all the more while I was away with nothing to do,' said Sophy; 'fancy might be worse than fact. You don't know how I used to forget the nonsense when he had been ten minutes in the room, because it was just starved out. Now, when it will be a sin, I believe that strength will be given me to root it out;' her look grew determined, but she gasped for breath.

'And your bodily strength, my dear?'

'If I should be ill, then it would be natural to go away,' said Sophy, smiling; 'but I don't think I shall be. This is only the end of my fever to see it settled. Now I am thankful, and my heart has left off throbbing when I am still. I shall be all right to-morrow.'

'I hope so; but you must spare yourself.'

'Besides,' she added, 'one of the worst parts has been that, in the fancy that a change was to come, I have gone about everything in an unsettled way; and now I want to begin again at my duties, my readings and parish matters, as my life's work, steadily and in earnest.'

'Not violently, not to drive care away.'

'I have tried that once, and will not again. You shall arrange for me, and I will do just as you tell me;' and she raised her eyes with the most deep and earnest gaze of confiding love that had ever greeted Albinia from any of the three. 'I'll try not to grieve you, for you are *too* sorry for me;' and she threw her arms round her neck. 'Oh, mamma! nothing is so bad when you help me to bear it!'

Tears fell fast at this precious effusion from the deep, sincere heart, at the moment when Albinia herself was most guilty in her own eyes. Embraces were her only answer, and how fervent!

'And, mamma,' whispered Sophy, 'if you could only let me have some small part of teaching little Albinia.'

A trotting of small feet and a call of mamma was

heard. The little maiden was come with her good-nights, and in one moment Albinia had lifted her into her sister's arms, where she was devoured with kisses, returning them with interest, and with many a fondling 'Poor Sophy,' and 'Dear Sophy.'

When the last fond good-night had passed, and the little one had gone away to her nest, Sophy said in a soft, natural, unconstrained voice, 'I am very sleepy. If you will be so kind as to send up my tea, I will go to bed. Thank you; good-night.'

That was the redrawing of the curtain of reserve, the resignation of sentiment, the resumption of common life. The romance of Sophia Kendal's early life had ended when she wounded her fingers in wreathing G  n  vi  re's hair. Her next romance might be on behalf of her beautiful little sister.

Albinia was cured of her fretfulness towards the new order of events, and her admiration of Sophy carried her through all that was yet to come. It was the easier since Sophy did not insist on unreasonable self-martyrdoms, and in her gratitude for being allowed her purpose in the main, was submissive in detail, and had mercy on her own powers of endurance, not inflicting the sight of the lovers on herself more than was needful, and not struggling with the languor that was a good reason for remaining much upstairs. She worked and read, but without overdoing anything, and wisely undertook a French translation, as likely to occupy her attention without forcing her to over-exert her powers. Not that she said so; she carefully avoided all reference to her feelings; and Albinia could almost have deemed the whole a dream, excepting for the occasional detection of a mournful fixed gaze, which was instantaneously winked away as soon as Sophy herself became aware of it.

Her trouble, though of a kind proverbially the most hardening and exacerbating, had an entirely contrary tendency on her. The rigidity and harsh judgment which had betokened her states of morbid depression since she had outgrown the sulky form, had passed away, and she had been right in predicting that she should not be cross,

for she had become sweet and gentle towards all. Her voice was pitched more softly, and though she looked ill, and had lost the bloom which had once given her a sort of beauty, her eyes had a meek softness that made them finer than when they wore the stern, steady glance that used to make poor Gilbert quail. Her strength came not from pride, but from Grace; and to her, disappointment was more softening than even the prosperous affection that Albinia had imagined. It was love; not earthly but heavenly.

If her father had been less busy, her pale cheek might have alarmed him; but he was very much taken up with builders and estimates, with persuading some of the superfluous population to emigrate, and arranging where they should go; and while she kept the family hours and habits, he did not notice lesser indications of flagging spirits, or if he did, he was wise, and thought the cause had better not be put into words.

Albinia had brought herself to give fair sympathy to the lovers; and when once she had begun it was easy to go on, not as ardently as if she had never indulged in her folly, but enough to gratify two such happy and grateful people, who wanted no one but each other, and agreed in nothing better than in thinking her a sort of guardian angel to them both.

Généviève had assuredly never given her heart to Gilbert, and it was ready in all the freshness of maidenly bliss to meet the manly ardour of Ulick O'More. He was almost overpoweringly demonstrative and eager, now and then making game of himself but yet not able to help rushing down to Willow Lawn ten or twelve times a day, just to satisfy himself that his treasure was there; and if he could not meet with her, catching hold of Mr. or Mrs. Kendal to rave till they drove him back to his business. Such glee danced in his eyes, there was such suppressed joyousness in his countenance, and his step was so much nearer a dance than a walk, that his very air well-nigh betrayed what was to be an absolute secret, till there had been an answer from Ballymakilty, until which time Généviève would not rest in the hope

of a happy future, nor give up her fears that she had not brought pain upon him.

In he came at last, so exulting and so grateful, that it was a shock to discover that 'the kindest letter and fullest consent in the world,' meant his father's 'supposing he would do as he pleased; as long as he asked for nothing, it was no concern of his.' It was discovered, by Ulick's delight, that he had expected to have a battle, and Albinia was scandalized; but Mr. Kendal told her it somewhat depended on what manner of father it was, whether an independent son could defer implicitly to his judgment; and though principle might withhold Ulick from flat disobedience, he might not scruple at extorting reluctant consent. Besides his mother, whom he honoured far more really, had written, not without disappointment, but with full confidence in his ability to judge for himself.

Mr. Kendal and Mr. Ferrars both wrote warmly in G  n  vi  ve's praise; and certainly her footing at Willow Lawn was the one *point d'appui* in bringing round the O'More family; so that as Ulick truly said, 'It was Mrs. Kendal whom he had to thank for the blessing of his life.' Had poor Miss Goldsmith's description of Miss Durant's birth, parentage, and education been the only one that had reached Ballymakilty, a prohibition would assuredly have been issued; but he was left sufficiently free to satisfy his own conscience; and before G  n  vi  ve had surmounted half her scruples, the whole town was ringing with the news, though no one could guess how it got wind. To be sure the Dusautoys had been put into a state of rapture, and poor Mr. Hope had had the fatal stroke administered to him. He looked so like a ghost that Mr. Dusautoy contrived to release him at once, whereupon he went to try the most unwholesome curacy he could find, with serious intentions of exchanging his living for it; but he fortunately became so severely and helplessly ill there, that he was pretty well cured of his mental fever, and quite content to go to his heath, and do his work there like the humble and earnest man that he was, perhaps all the better for having been personally taught something more than could be gained from books and colleges.

Miss Goldsmith was the most to be pitied. She would not hear a word from her nephew, refused to go near Willow Lawn, packed up her goods and went to Bath, where Ulick promised the much distressed G  n  vi  e that she would yet relent. G  n  vi  e was somewhat consoled by the increasing cordiality of the Irish letters, and was carried along by the extreme delight and triumph of her good old aunt. By some wonderful exertion of Irish faculties, Ulick succeeded in bringing mademoiselle to Bayford in his jaunting car, when she laughed, wept, sobbed, and embraced, in a bewilderment of transport; pronounced the *trousseau* worthy of an angel of the *ancien r  gime*; warned G  n  vi  e against expecting *amour* to continue instead of *amiti  *, and carried home conversation for the nuns for the rest of their lives.

That *trousseau* was Sophy's special charge, and most jealous was she that it should in no respect fall short of that outfit of Lucy's for which she had cared so little. A hard task it was to make G  n  vi  e accept what Lucy had exacted; but Sophy held the purse-strings, wrote the orders, and had her own way.

She and her little sister were the only available bridesmaids, since Rose O'More was not allowed to come. Having made up her mind to this from the first, when the subject came forward, her open, cheerful look and manner were meant to show that she was not afraid, and that her wish was real. Freely resigning him, why should she not be glad to join in calling down the blessing?

The wedding was fixed for Easter week, which fell early, and Albinia cast about for some excuse for taking her away afterwards. An opportune occasion offered. Sir William Ferrars wrote from the East to propose the Kendals meeting him in Italy, and travelling home together; he was longing, he said, to see something of his sister, and he should enjoy sight-seeing ten times as much with a clever man like her husband to tell him all about it.

Mr. Ferrars strongly seconded the project! Clever fellow, not a word did he say; but did not he know the

secrets of that household as well or better than the inmates themselves?

Now that Tibbs's Alley was deserted, and plans fixed, architect and clerk of the works chosen, March winds ready for building and underground work to begin at once, what could be more prudent than for the inhabitants of Willow Lawn to remove far from the disturbance of ancient drains and no drains, and betake themselves to a purer atmosphere? Mr. Kendal was of no use as a superintendent, and needed no persuasion to flee from the chance of typhus.

As to the children, the time had come early when Maurice's whole nature cried out for school. He was much improved, and there was that real principle within him which made it not unsafe to launch him in a world where he might meet with more useful trials than those of home. Child as he was, his propensities were too much limited by the bounds of the town-house and garden, and the society of his sisters, one too old and one too young to serve as tomboys. He needed to meet his match, and work his way; Albinia felt that school had become his element, and Mr. Kendal only wanted to make his education the reverse of Gilbert's; so he ran nearly frantic between the real jacket and the promise of going to school with Willie. He knew not, though his mother mourned over, the coming heart-sickness and mother-sickness of the first night, the first Sunday, the first trouble. It was sure to be very severe in one of such strong and affectionate feeling, but it must come sooner or later, and the better that it should be conquered while home was still a paradise. Fairmead was not so far from his destination but that his uncle would keep an eye on him; and Winifred held out a hope that, if the tour lasted long enough, he should bring out both boys to spend their holidays with them. A very good Winifred!

Albinia the Less was to become a traveller, for the good reason that nobody could or would go without her. They were to go direct to Lucy, who was at Naples with a second boy, and pining for home faces and home comforts

—the inducement which perhaps worked most strongly to make Sophy like the journey, for since her delusion had been swept away, a doubly deep and intense feeling had sprung up towards her only sister, whose foibles had been forgotten in long separation.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE Lake of Lucerne lay blue and dark in the shade of the mountains, on whose summits the evening sunshine was fast mounting, peak after peak falling into purple shadow.

There was a small inlet where a stream rushed down between the hills ; and on the green slope stood a chalet, the rich red of the roof contrasting with the green pasture. A little boat was moored to a stump near the land, and in it sat Sophia Kendal, her hat by her side, listening to and answering merrily the chatter of Maurice, who tumbled about in the boat, often causing it severe shocks, while he inspected the cut of the small sail which she was making for the miniature specimen, which he often tried in the clear cold water.

Farther off, a little up the hill-side, Willie Ferrars was holding the hand of the chestnut-curled, black-eyed fairy, 'little Awk,' who was impressing him by her fluency in two languages at once, according as she chattered to him in English, or in French to a picturesque peasant, her great ally, who was mowing his flowery crop of hay, glancing like an illumination, with an under-current of brilliant blossoms among the grass.

Wandering with slow conversational pace up and down the beach of the lake, were Mr. Kendal and Sir William Ferrars, conversing as usual ; the soldier, with quick alert comprehension, wide observation, and clearness of mind, which jumped to the very points to which the scholar's deeply-read and long-digested arguments were bringing him more slowly.

On a projecting point sat Albinia, her fair hair shaded under her dark hat, beneath which her English complexion glowed fresh and youthful, as with flat tin box by her side, and block sketch-book on her knee, she mixed and she painted, and tried to catch those purples and those blues with unabated ardour. Suddenly a great trailing frond of mountain fern came over the brim of her hat from behind. 'Oh, Maurice, don't!' Then looking up and laughing, 'Oh, it is you, is it? I knew Maurice would do, whichever it might be; but see, the other is quite out of mischief.'

'Unless he should upset Sophy into the lake.'

'He can't do that, the rope is too short. But is not he very much improved? He has quite lost his imperious manner towards her.'

'Nothing like school for making a boy behave himself to his sisters.'

'Exactly, as I learnt by experience long ago. I am glad William did not see him till he had learnt to be agreeable. How he does admire him!'

'You'll never make anything of that sketch; the mountain is humpbacked, and the face of that precipice is exactly like Colonel Bury;' and he caught up a pencil to help out the resemblance with nostril and eyebrow.

'For shame, to be so *mischievicious*; such a great boy as you.'

'Well, we all came out here to be great boys, didn't we? I am sure you look a dozen years younger than when I last saw you, Mrs. Grandmother. By-the-by, it was a bold stroke to encumber yourself with that brat; what's become of him?'

'Susan has taken him in asleep. You see, Maurice, I really could not help it, the poor little thing was so sickly and had never thriven; but when they were a little while in bracing air, Lucy was longing to have him in England, and his father, who never believes in anything but what he likes, *would* not see it; and what with those Italian servants, and Algernon hunting Lucy about as he does, it would have been the death of him. Susan, good creature, had taken to him of her own accord the moment we came

to Naples, and could not have borne to leave him; and you know the Awk is almost off her hands now; and Sophy, who first proposed it, or I am sure I should never have ventured, is delighted to do anything for either of them, and always has her little sister in her room. As to papa, he was very good; and the child is very little in his way, and has been quite well ever since we have been in this delicious air.'

'How did you get Lucy to consent?'

'Poor dear, it was a melancholy business; but she had so often been in alarm about him, and had suffered so much from having to leave him with people she did not trust, that she caught at the proposal before she fairly contemplated what the parting would be; and when she did, Algernon was too glad to be relieved from him not to keep her up to it; but it won't do to think of it, she has her baby, who is healthier, and if they remain abroad, I suspect we shall keep little Ralph altogether; he is a dear little fellow, and Sophy has so taken possession of Albinia, that I should be quite lost if I did not set up a private child.'

'What do you call him? I thought his name was Belraven.'

'I could not possibly call him so; and his aunts, by way of adding to the aviary, made him Ralph the Raven, so I mean it to stick by him; I believe papa has forgotten the other dreadful fact, for I caught him giving his name as Ralph Cavendish Dusautoy. How the dear vicar of Bayford will devour him! and what work I shall have to keep him from being spoilt!'

'Then you think they will remain abroad?'

'Algernon hates England; and all his habits are foreign.'

'Did he make himself tolerably agreeable?'

'He really did. One could bear to be patronized by one's host better than by one's guest, and he was in whole-some awe of William. Besides, he is really at home in Italy, and knows his way about so well, that he was not a bad Cicerone. I am sure Sophy could never have done either Vestivius or Pompeii without his arrangements; and

as long as he had a victim for his *catalogue raisonnée*, he was very placable and obliging. That was all extracts, so it really was not so bad.'

'So you were satisfied?'

'He has a bad lot about him, that's the worst—Polish counts, disreputable artists and poets, any one who has a spurious sort of fame, and knows how to flatter him. Edmund was terribly disgusted.'

'Very bad for his wife.'

'You see, she is a thorough-going mother, and no linguist. She really is improved, and I like her more really than ever I could, poor dear. I believe her head was once quite turned, and that he influenced her entirely, and made her forget everything else; but she has a heart, though not much of a head, and sorrow and illness and children have brought it out; and she is what a 'very woman' becomes, I suppose, if there be any good in her, an abstract wife and mother.'

'Was it not dangerous to take away her child?'

'There was another, you know, and it was to save his life. The duties clashed, and were destroying all comfort.'

'How does he behave to her?'

'I believe she has all the love he has to spare; he is proud of her, and dresses her up, and has endless portraits of her. Luckily she keeps her beauty. She is more refined, and has more expression; one could sometimes cry to watch her; and he likes to have her with him, and to discourse to her, but without the slightest perception or consideration of what she would prefer, and with no notion of sacrificing anything for her or the children. I know she is afraid of him; I have seen her tremble if there were any chance of his being annoyed; and she would not object to any plan of his if it were to cost her life. I believe it would be misery to her, but I think she would resist—ay, she *did* resist, and in vain, for the sake of her child.'

'Does her affection hold out, do you think?'

'Oh, yes, the spaniel and walnut-tree love, which is in us all, and doubly in the very woman. It is very beauti-

ful. She is so proud of him and of her gilded slavery, and so unconsciously submissive and patient; but it is a harder life, I guess, than we can see. I am sure it must be, for every bit of personal vanity and levity is worn out of her; she only goes out to satisfy him; dresses to please his eye, and talks, with her eye seeking round for him, in dread of being rebuked for mistakes or bad French. And for the rest, her joy is to be left in peace with little Algernon upon her lap. Yes, I hope living in all womanly virtues may be training and compensation; but the saddest part of the affair is that he does not think it fashionable to be religious, and she has not moral courage to make open resistance.'

'May it come,' fervently.

'It is strange, how much more real and good a creature she is now, than when at home in the midst of all external observances. Yet it cannot be right! she surely ought to make more stand; but it is too, too literally being afraid to say her soul is her own, for she is unhappy. She does the utmost she can without offending him, and feels it as she never did before.'

'There is no judging,' said Maurice, as his sister looked at him with eyes full of sorrowful yearning. 'No one can tell where are the boundaries of the two duties. Poor girl! she has put herself into a state of temptation and trial; but she may be shielded by her exercise of so much that is simply good, and her womanly qualities may become not idolatry, but a training in reaching higher.'

'May it be so, indeed!' said Albinia. 'Oh, Maurice! how I once disdained being told I was too young, and how true it was! What visions I had about those three, and what failures have resulted?'

'Your visions may have vanished, but you did your work faithfully, and it has not been fruitless.'

'Ay, in shipwrecked lives. Mischiefs wherever I meant to do best! Why, I let even my own Maurice grow unmanageable while I was nursing poor grand-mamma. The voluntary duty choked the natural one, and yet—'

'And yet,' interrupted her brother, 'that was no error.'

‘Oh, no! I would not have done it for anything.’

‘Nor do I think the boy the worse for it. I may venture now on saying he *was* intolerable, and it hastened school; but though your rein was loose, you never let it fall; and maybe, the self-conquest was the best thing for him. If you had neglected him wilfully for your own pleasure, nothing but harm could have been expected. As you were absorbed by a sacred act of duty, I believe it will all be made up to you in your son.’

‘Oh, Maurice, if I might trust so! I believe I am doubly set on that boy doing well, because his father must not, *must* not have another pang!’

‘I think he knows that. I do not imagine that he will never be carried astray by high spirits; but I am sure that he has the strength, honour, and sweetness that are the elements of greatness!’

‘Nothing we did so changed him as the loss of his brother. Oh, Maurice! there was my most earnest wish to do right, and my most fatal mistake!’

‘And greatest success. Gilbert owed everything to you.’

‘Had I but silenced my foolish pride, he might have been safe in India now.’

‘We do not know how safe he might be. I did indeed think it a pity your influence led the other way, but things might have been far worse; if you made some blunders, your love and your earnestness were working on that susceptible nature; and what better hope can we wish to have than what rested with us at Malta? what better influence than has remained with Maurice or with Fred?’

Albinia had not yet learnt to talk calmly of Gilbert’s last hours, so she put this aside, and smiling through her tears, said, ‘Ah! when Emily writes to Sophy, that their boy is to have his name, since they can wish nothing better for him than to be like him.’

‘The past vision always a little above what is visible?’

‘Hardly, Emily and Fred are as proud of each other as two peacocks; and well they may be, for—stoop down, ’tis an intense secret; but do you know the effect of their Sebastopol den?’

‘Eh?’

‘Lieutenant-General Sir William Ferrars is going out in quest of Emily’s younger sister.’

‘You ridiculous child! That’s a trick of yours.’

‘No, indeed. William was surprised into a moment of confidence, walking home in the moonlight from the Coliseum. *En vrai militaire*, he has begun at the right end, and written to Mr. Kinnaird to ask leave to come and try his luck; and cool as he looks, I believe he would rather prepare for Inkermann.’

‘Well! if he be not making a fool of himself at his time of life, I am sure I am very glad?’

‘Time of life! He’s but three years older than Edmund. If you are not more respectful, we shall have to go out to Canada to countenance him.’

‘I shall be rejoiced to see him with a home, and finding life beyond his profession; but I had rather he had known more of her.’

‘That’s what he never would do. He cannot talk to a young lady. Why he admires Lucy a great deal more than Sophy!’

‘Well, judging by the recent brides, I think if it had been me, I should have gone in search of Mrs. Ulick O’More’s younger sister.’

‘Ah! I wanted particularly to hear of your visit at the bank. You had luncheon there, I think. How do they get on?’

‘It is the most charming ménage in the world. She looks very graceful and elegant, and keeps him in great order, and is just the wife he wanted—a little sauciness and piquancy to spur him up at one time, and restrain him at another, with the real ballast that both have, makes such a perfect compound, that it is only too delightful to see anything so happy and so good in this world. They both seem to have such vivid enjoyment of life.’

‘Pray, has any one called on Gèneviève? though she could dispense with it.’

‘Oh, yes; Bryan O’More spent a fortnight there. And see what a moustache will do! The Osbornes, Drurys, Wolfes, and Co., all dubbed themselves dear Mrs. O’More’s

dearest friends. I found a circle of them round her, and when I observed that Bryan was not half such a handsome fellow as his brother, you should see how I was scorned.'

'I hope Bryan may not play his father's game again. Do you know how she was received in Ireland?'

'The whole clan adore her! Ulick, with his Anglo-Saxon truthfulness, got into serious scrapes for endeavouring to disabuse them of the notion that she was sole heiress of the ancient marquisate of Durant. I believe Connel was ready to call Ulick out for disrespect to his own wife.'

'And was she happy there?'

'Very much amused, and treated like a queen; charmed with his mother, and great friends with Rose. They have brought Redmond home to lick him into shape, and I believe Rose is to come and be tamed.'

'Always Ulick's wish,' said Albinia, as her eye fixed upon Sophy.

And her brother, with perhaps too obvious a connexion of ideas, said, 'Is *she* quite strong?'

'Very well,' said Albinia. 'I am glad we brought her. The sight of beauty has been like a new existence. I saw it on her brow, in calmness and rest, the first evening of the Bay of Naples. It has seemed to soothe and elevate her, though all in her own silent way; but watch her as she sits with her face to those mountains, hear her voice, and you will feel that the presence of grandeur and beauty is repose and happiness to her; and I think the remembrance will always be so, even in work-a-day Bayford.'

'Yes; because remembrance of such glory connects with hope of future glory.'

'And it is a rest from human frets and passions. She has taken to botany, too; and I am glad, for I think those studies that draw one off from men's works and thoughts, do most good to the weary, self-occupied brain. And the children are a delight to her!'

'Sophy is your greatest work.'

'Not mine!' cried Albinia. 'The noblest by nature, the dearest, the most generous.'

'Great qualities; but they would have been only

wretched self-preying torments, but for the softening of your affection,' said Maurice.

'Dear, dear friend and sister and child in one,' cried Albinia. And then meeting her brother's eyes, she said, 'Yes; you know to the full how noble she is, and how——'

'I can guess how imprudent a young step-mother can be,' said Maurice, smiling.

'It is very strange. I don't know how to be thankful enough for it; but really her spirits have been more equal, her temper more even than ever it had been, and that just when I thought my folly had been most ruinous.'

'Yes, Albinia. After all, it is more than man can hope or expect to make no blunders; but I do verily believe that while an earnest will saves us, by God's grace, from wilful sins, the effects of the inadvertences that teach us our secret faults will not be fatal; and while we are indeed honestly and faithfully doing our best, though we are truly unprofitable servants, that our lapses through infirmity will be compensated, both in the training of our own character and the results upon others.'

'If we are indeed faithfully doing our best,' repeated Albinia.

THE END.

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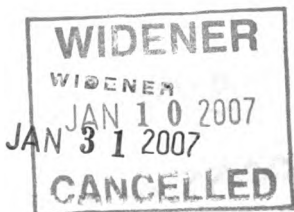
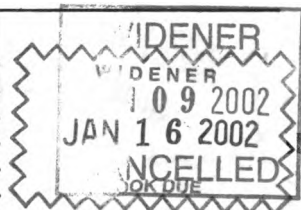
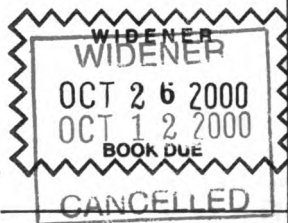


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